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ILLUSTRATION
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再召喚 された 勇者は

一般人 として 生きていく?

エルフの国の水晶姫

WILL THE BRAVE SUMMONED AGAIN
LIVE AS AN ORDINARY PERSON?

THE CRYSTAL PRINCESS
IN THE COUNTRY OF ELVES

宝島社

Will the Re-Summoned Hero Live as an Ordinary Person

by Katanakaji

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Chapter 45

In the moment that Souta tries to pass the letters he takes out from his magic bag to the man, the guard room's door swings open.

"Wa-Wait a minute Narasu-sama! We're in the middle of protocol now." The woman called Narasu comes into the room hurriedly without paying attention to the people trying to stop her, she keeps going to Arezel after shooting a single glance at Souta.

She has silvery white hair and a different atmosphere from other elves.

"Arezel!"

Called by her master, Arezel stand up from her seat, surprised.

"Master! Ummm, I'm sorry. Even though I was being told not to go alone..."

"This!"

Narasu raises her hand, seeing that, Arezel curls up her body.

"You complete idiot! Do you know how worried I was because you didn't return!?"

After saying that, she hugs Arezel.

"M-Master... I'm-I'm sorry, uu, Uwaannnn."

"This idiot! But I'm glad you're safe..."

The two shed tears while hugging each other.

The guards watch the scene of the two elves hugging each other with warm gazes.

Even after making a fuss and then crying, no one seems to protest.

Also, from the way the guards call her, Souta assumes that Narasu has quite a status.

After ten minutes or so, the two finally stop crying and calm down.

"Sorry, I got a bad feeling about her. I can't hold my tear duct from bursting when I see her safety."

"When I see my master's face, I feel relieved, that's why ..."

They lower their heads to the surroundings.

"Both of you should raise your heads, it's okay, that's natural after what

happened."

The man who had a short tempered attitude with Souta says that in a surprisingly gentle tone, he also put on a gentle expression on his face.

"Anyway, I'm glad I can meet Narasu."

Surprised that Souta calls her without an honorific, the man and Arezel look at Souta with startled expressions.

"M-Master, this person here is Souta-san, he's the one who helped me."

Narasu also moves her gaze to Souta who called her name without an honorific. The look in her eyes, however, is not of anger that she was called without an honorific, but gratitude for what Souta did to help Arezel.

"Souta-dono, you should already know, I'm Narasu, Arezel's master. Thank you for rescuing Arezel. Also, I apologize for my rudeness of not giving you my gratitude earlier."

Just like before, Narasu also lowers her head toward Souta, surprising him.

Unlike the apologies to everyone else, this time the apologize is for Souta, someone from the human race. It's rare for elves who feel repugnance toward other races to apologize to someone from another other race without reluctance.

The guardsman is surprised and tries to stop Narasu.

"N-Narasu-sama, you don't have to lower your head to such a man! Especially when he's of the human race."

"What's wrong with that? Regardless of which race, it's only natural to lower your head to the benefactor who help your precious person."

After rebuking the man, she turns to Souta and lowers her head again.

"I'm surprised. So there are people like you Please raise your head, it'll trouble me if you keep your head lowered like that."

After Souta says so, she finally raises her head.

"I wish there's something I can offer as gratitude, but....."

"Unn, I don't know if I can ask you..... But, it would be great if you could get me an entry permit."

Narasu hits her chest twice.

"It's fine if that's the case, I will do something somehow. You, it's fine, right? Just give him the entry permit already."

Narasu's declaration has the man shaken and panicked.

"No, no, that is... If Narasu-sama says so, then it's okay, but I can't let such a dubious person in the country."

"Come to think of it, I was told to hand over this red envelope to Narasu."

Narasu receives the envelope and begin to read the letter inside.

"Fumu, so, it's from Carena huh, Souta-dono knows Carena Fumufumu, Stone Fever ... What! So that's the story."

After reading some pages of the letter while muttering to herself occasionally, she grabs Souta's shoulders and bring their faces closer.

"C-Close."

Souta tries to get away by twisting his body, but fails to do so as Narasu has him locked in place.

"I understand the circumstances from Carena's letter. By all means, please come to my workshop (I have information about Dina-sama)."

She says the last part in a voice small enough that only Souta can hear it. As it reaches Souta's ears, his expression slowly changes.

After releasing Souta, she gives an instruction to the guard.

"That's all, finish the immigration procedure for Souta-dono right away."

"Y-yes Ma'am!"

Unlike before, as the man being ordered with stern expression, he hurriedly leaves the room to do his task.

"Souta-dono, with this, your entry to the country shouldn't have any problems."

"Thanks for that, but what's that about Di-..."

"Sssshhh! We will talk about it in the workshop."

Narasu blocks Souta's mouth, stopping him from saying any further with her finger.

"... I understand. For the time being, I guess next procedure is not here right?"

"That's right... That man should be back before long now."

Like she says, a guardsman comes into the room in a hurry.

"Hahh hahh hahh, I kept you waiting, we will start the immigration procedure, so please come to the administration office."

When they leave the room following the man, the guards watch Souta's group

from afar, or to be precise, they watch Narasu.

"Wow, that's Narasu-sama in person."

"I never expected her to come to a place like this."

"Aahhh, Narasu-sama, how wonderful."

And other comments like that are audible to Souta's group despite their efforts to hide their voices.

"You guys! Return to your posts!!"

The guardsman who's guiding Souta's group scolds them, and so the other guards all return to their posts hurriedly.

"Narasu-sama, I apologize for my colleagues' rudeness."

"It's fine, it's just like when I see a rare animal. Rather than that, let's hurry to the administration office."

Upon entering the administration office, Souta and the other two are guided to different rooms.

The staff is a slender elf who looks nervous.

"You are the one who is permitted to enter the country with instructions from Narasu-sama right. Do you have an ID card of some sort? "

The tone is polite, but his eyes only show contempt at Souta.

"Yes, here's my ID card."

Souta pulls out his adventurer's guild card from his bag and puts it on the desk.

"So, an adventurer huh..... Highest rank is D, I'm concerned as to why Narasu-sama would let a person like this enter the country, but it's an order, so I guess it can't be helped."

He passes the card through a magic tool and then checks the official registration form.

Then, as usual, he puts a crystal in front of Souta. Souta puts his hand on the crystal in silence.

"Yes, there's no criminal record. You can go, just go away from here quickly."

Souta comes out from a different door that he used to enter, and outside there is Ed that already passed the examination waiting for him, along with two other people.

"You came at last, shall we go?"

"Let's go!"

Narasu's remark is followed by Arezel's.

Thus, Souta steps into the country of elves.

Chapter 46

After the inspection, the three board the carriage and advance through the valley.

The valley is wide, so there won't be any problems even if there are multiple carriages moving side-by-side.

There are holes big enough for people to pass on the left and right wall of the valley. The elven guards are placed there.

Just like in many stories, elves here are experts in archery. Should anyone want to break through the valley, their fate would be sealed by arrows from above.

Souta, who's holding the reins in the coachman's seat, listens to the conversation of the two behind him.

"By the way, Master, you came soon after we were brought into the guard's room. Where were you?"

"I came so far to search for Arezel, but I was stopped by the guards. I had no choice but to wait at the immigration office. When you two were brought into the guardroom, I was contacted. From there, I rushed off to see you."

"Geez, for master to join the search is so rash! "

With an angry face, Arezel warns Narasu.

"" You're one to talk. ""

Souta says that absentmindedly, and Narasu does so as well at the same time.

"Hiii, I'm sorry!"

The elves above show pleasant smiles as they watch the harmonious atmosphere of Narasu and Arezel.

However, they send gazes full of negative emotions like anger, suspicion, and disgust toward Souta who brings the two back.

Souta is aware that he's being watched, but he ignores it and just hums and sings as he chews the fruit he takes from his bag.

The elves feel irritated looking at Souta's attitude. But they don't want to trigger Souta's companion anger, and so they hold their arrows back.

"Souta-san, what are you eating?"

Unaware of the gazes from around, Arezel curiously asks Souta.

"I bought a large amount of fruits before I left Toura. Would you like to eat it? There are still a couple of barrels left."

Souta takes out the fruits for the two, and they curiously try to take a closer look.

It seems that this fruit is rarely seen in the country of elves. Both of them looking at it curiously.

"Thanks for the food! The food prepared by Souta-san is always good!"

"Hoo, interesting. Can you please give me one?"

Souta throws them behind him and to the two.

Narasu is able to receive it easily, while the other fruit hits Arezel's face.

"Aww, uuu, it doesn't go well."

Souta who sees it tilts his head.

"I thought that your motor skills would be good considering that you're tasked for material collection outside, but I guess it's just my imagination."

"That's how she's, her vigor is something to be amazed at, but... the rest is, unfortunately, unable to reach that level."

"Ah, I understand, so it's that."

Arezel looks back and forth from the two that are nodding at each other. She puffs out her cheeks to show her anger.

"Mou, both of you are mean! Even I can do things properly, you know! "

"" ... ""

"P-Please say something, both of you!"

Looking at Arezel's reaction, the two burst into laughter.

"Mou! More than that, Master, let's eat already..... Delicious!!"

She tries to change the topic and starts eating the fruit, and a moment later, her angry face is nowhere to be seen and has been replaced by a smile.

"Is it really that tasty, let me taste mine ... Certainly, this is delicious."

They eat the fruits at a quick pace and finish them in less than five minutes.

"There are still a lot, aren't there? Can I have another? "

"Arezel, not fair. Souta-dono, can I also have another? "

Surprised by how fast they ate the fruits, Souta takes out more and hands them to the two.

"HIHIEN."

With such interaction going, Ed suddenly neighs as if he wants to let Souta know something.

"What's wrong? Ed."

When Souta turn his sight back to the front, he can see the end of the valley, furthermore, there is a huge tree visible in the distance.

"Souta-dono, that is the guardian spirit of the elven country 'Sacred Tree'. The country is developed around the Sacred Tree."

Narasu explains to Souta and Ed who are still amazed by the sight, but Souta is amazed in a different way.

"Was it that big? I can feel the flow of time by looking at it..."

"Huh? Souta-san, did you say something? "

Souta mutters in a small voice, and when Arezel asks, Souta only replies by shaking his head.

Past the valley is a gentle downward slope, and they enter a forest as they descend.

Unlike the forest of the darkness where Souta and Arezel met, it feels warm from the sunlight that isn't too strong. There are also the presences of living things here and there.

"This is how a forest should be."

"Well, I can see where you're coming from. That forest was terrible."

They remember the forest of darkness, and their expressions become cloudy.

"What kind of forest is that terrible forest?"

"It's a forest where I and Arezel met, east of the checkpoint, it was dark as if it was night."

"Arezel, is that the forest you often went for when you collect alone?"

Once Souta's explanation ends, Narasu asks Arezel.

"Uuu, I'm sorry. Yes, it's that forest. But for some reason, it had a strange atmosphere unlike usual."

Arezel answers with an apologetic face.

"Is, that so. It was a normal forest the last time I went there ... There might be something there."

"Yeah, there must be something wrong with that forest. It was dark, too dark. It

was pitch black even in daytime. The essence of magic was also thick. Despite that, there didn't seem to be a magic spring nearby."

"Fumu, depending on the situation, it may be necessary to investigate."

Hearing Souta's explanation, Narasu shows a troubled expression and goes into deep thought.

The roads in the forest are maintained without any kind of height difference, this makes it easier for Ed. It's not long before they pass the forest.

The end of the forest draws a circle, enclosing the capital.

The capital of the elven kingdom is protected by a castle wall surrounding it.

The capital is a castle town. The castle is built beside the sacred tree in the center.

Upon arriving at the east gate, only the standard checks like ID card identification and criminal crystal ball are done.

Narasu and Arezel are given permission to enter just by face alone.

After finishing the entrance check, Narasu calls out to Souta as he enters the city by taking a carriage.

"Souta-san, welcome to the capital of the elven kingdom, 'Girno!'!"

Chapter 47

The three who are able to enter the country safely decide to follow Narasu's suggestion to go straight to her workshop.

The workshop is located in the west part of the city.

On the way to the workshop, the number of houses and shops gradually decrease until they reach a wide open space.

There, a vertical shed stands alone in the middle of a vast plot of land.

"This is my workshop. You can go in with the carriage as is. The door should be big enough for it."

Narasu and Arezel get off the carriage and go to the shed's doors, unlocking them.

The doors open to the side, the two open the doors to the left and right respectively.

Even if a carriage can enter, with the size of this shed, won't it be cramped? Souta thinks so, but still enters as instructed by the two.

Once inside, there is a slope leading to the basement. He keeps going and reaches a vast space that can't be imagined it's there from outside.

"Can you park the carriage in the spot over there? I'm sorry, Horse-kun should also stay there."

"We are going to the room on the other side first."

Souta parks the carriage in the corner where there is nothing placed, and then lays down fur for Ed and tells him to wait.

In addition, other than the usual bucket filled with meals, Souta also put a bucket for excretion purpose.

"Ed, sorry, but wait here for now."

Ed nods once, and Souta goes to the other room after he strokes Ed's head once.

Inside the room is a living space, the lived-in feeling overflows from it. This room is isolated from the interior of the workshop. There is no atmosphere of an alchemist living here at all.

"Souta-dono, can you go over there first? Arezel, you can go rest, I will make the tea."

"No, it's okay, because I'm only good at making tea, I will do it! Master, please talk to Souta-san in the meantime."

Saying that, Arezel pushes Narasu's back who is trying to head to the kitchen back outside.

"Ohh dear, she's a good girl, but it is a fault that she never yields once she sets her heart to something."

The tone she uses makes her sound troubled, but she shows a smile.

"She was saved by chance this time, you should keep her reins better so it doesn't happen again in the future."

"That's true, I think that it turned out to be a good lesson for her..... but I have to be more careful from here on."

"That's good ... So about the thing you said to me in the guard's room, what do you mean?"

The atmosphere changes once Souta sends a stern gaze at Narasu.

"It's about Dinarius-sama. From Carena's letter, it seems like you come here to meet Dina-sama."

She stops there and then clears her throat.

"Well, before I talk about it in detail, I have a request for Souta-dono."

"what?"

Narasu points at Souta, more precisely to Souta's arm.

"I'd like you to remove that camouflage bracelet. I will tell you more about Dina-sama if you do it."

For a while, Souta and Narasu stare at each other.

In the middle of it, Arezel comes to serve the tea.

"Ehh? Is something happen? Why both of you staring at each other silently?... Anyway, I have prepared the tea, so please enjoy it."

After putting the tea in front of the two people and putting sweet on the middle of the table, Arezel also sits on her chair and started to sip her tea.

"So, what happened?"

Arezel who is unable to grasp the situation, tilts her head and asks innocently.

With the state like that, Souta exhales his breath.

"Fu, I got overwhelmed. It's not something that needs to be hidden that much, so it's fine."

Souta rolls his sleeve, then remove the bracelet, once removed, his body wrapped in light for a moment.

When the light dissipates, Souta's hair and eyes are back to its original color of black.

"Is this fine? Let me hear about Dina immediately."

"So-So-Souta-san, what happened!?"

Arezel is so surprised that her eyes go round and round.

Narasu is also surprised but for different reason than Arezel.

"Just as I thought ... So it's really you, Souta-dono."

From the reaction, Souta showing a doubtful expression to Narasu who seems to know his true identity.

"Did you know me?"

"Yes, ah, no, not directly, I've just seen the pictures."

"Picture? I don't think there is a painting with me drawn or maybe there is, I certainly remember there was a painter invited to the castle..."

Narasu nods.

"Yes, the painting went to Dina-sama's hands afterward. Just some days before Dina-sama was sealed, the painting was handed to my father."

"So that's how you know me."

"Hm? What do you mean? Did Souta-san appear in an old picture? "

"Yeah, can you be quiet for a bit by the way, the story will be complicated if you join the conversation it seems."

Narasu tells that to Arezel with a smile.

"Ehhh, but"

"Be. Quiet."

This time Narasu said that with a bit of force while putting her hand on Arezel's head.

"Hii!"

Arezel gives a small scream while nodding over and over from the pressure, she nods while putting her hands on her mouth.

After confirming that Arezel stays silent, Narasu takes a piece of paper in a

locked cabinet and sits back across of Souta.

"Well then, shall we continue as there is no more disruption now."

"Hn, ahh, yeah that's fine."

Souta is also a bit overwhelmed by Narasu's pressure.

"Firstly, about Souta-dono, you are the hero drawn in this picture, are you not?"

In the paper she spreads over the table, there is a picture of Souta and his companion.

Souta remembers that one time he was asked to pose for the picture.

After a brief silent, he opens his mouth.

"..... That's right, I'll admit since I can't hide it anymore. I'm the hero who was summoned a thousand years ago."

"!!!?"

Arezel is desperately suppressing her voice from the surprise.

"So it's true after all. The number of people who knows your name is limited now, it's the name that I only heard of before, and I only see your face from the picture. No way, what Dina-sama said really came true."

"Dina said something about me?"

She nods deeply.

"It's just something I heard from my father, but Dina-sama said there will be a day Souta-dono will return to this world."

"She predicted this would happen... I don't remember she has some sort of future sight ability."

Narasu once again stands up and goes to take something like a stone from another cupboard.

"And to give this to Souta-dono if you came here."

The stone placed on the table is an orange stone filled with magic power. Souta knows what kind of object this stone is.

Chapter 48

"The stone's name is Memory Stone. Long time ago, I made this as an experiment together with the elder, this is one of the samples."

"Is this stone by any chance, can keep someone's memories in it!? That's amazing!"

Souta takes it and nods.

"That's right. But... one thing, there's one problem with it. The condition to watch the recording inside it is if it's activated by me or the elder's magic power, which is pretty much the creator of this stone."

"So, that means the recipients are limited huh?"

"To leave the record, one needs to pour their magic power into it while recording the memory..... Anyway, it was a prototype, but since that person wanted it, we decided to gave her a couple of samples."

Looking at the stone in his hand, Souta shows a nostalgic expression.

"..... What is the content, I wonder? I want to see it alone. I'm sorry, can you lend me a vacant room? "

Based on the timing of when this stone was given to Narasu's father, Souta judge the content is not something light.

"Then, you can use this room, we will leave you alone.Let's go, Arezel."

"Y-Yes."

Narasu pulls Arezel's hand and together, they leave the room.

"What on earth will be shown I wonder....."

While muttering, Souta pours his magic power into the stone and then puts it on the table.

The stone emits light gradually and an image emerges.

What is reflected there is the image of Dinarius of the past day.

"Hnn, hmm. A-A-, I wonder if this is recording, I hope there is some sign of when it starts recording or things like that."

While speaking lightly through the magic stone, she complains while poking it.

"Well... it will be okay, since Souta-san made it, it should be fine, should be. but for that person to go missing."

Despite taking some time before she goes to the main topic, Souta doesn't get angry or impatient, instead, he watches her with a smile.

"Fufufu, still the same Dina I guess."

"Alright, let's just start and assume everything is fine."

With resolve, Dina switches her feeling and start talking about the main topic.

"When Souta-san watches this, I'll probably still be sealed in the Demon Crystal. There must be various rumors going around, but don't worry, because this is the decision I made. "

The smile on Souta's face from before vanishes, it replaced by a serious expression as he listens to Dina.

"I heard that you were repatriated to your original world, but I believe that Souta-san will return to this world, so I will wait for the day we meet again inside the seal."

She decided to spend years of her time sealed only in order to meet again with Souta.

"There must be people that will try to undo the seal, so I decided to use the Memory Stone as the key to unlock it. That way the seal can only unsealed by either Souta-san or the elder."

In her hand is another memory stone different from the one used for this record.

"Why... all this just to meet me...."

"Souta-san, you must be thinking why I do this right? Of course it's true that I want to meet with Souta-san again, but it's not only that, I have an information obtained by me and my brother unique skills, I want to tell it to you, no, I have to tell you. "

The older brother she mentions is the hero of elves that went to subdue the demon king together with Souta and the other heroes.

"Dina and her brother's skills....?"

For better cooperation, all seven heroes revealed their skills to each other, but it was up to their judgment if they want to reveal their unique skill or not.

And Dina's older brother, Soldia, kept it secret.

"If Souta-san able to undo the seal, we will talk at that time ... I mean, even if I tell you everything now, you might not undo the seal."

She says jokingly as she stuck out her tongue.

"Ufufufu, I don't think that Souta-san would do such a thing..... The truth is that I'm afraid that other people see this by any chance. So please, if you see this, please help me out of the seal. "

There is a tinge of fear mixed in her expression, and the recording ends there.

"Dina..."

Even when the stone already stops emitting the image, Souta is still standing there unmoving while staring into the space where Dinarius was projected a while ago.

After a while, knocking sounds can be heard from the room.

"Ummm, Souta-san, it's been a while, is it fine to enter the room now?"

After making sure there is no sound comes from the room, Arezel timidly opens the door.

"Hmm? Ah, sorry, it's over already, so it's fine to enter."

Following Arezel, Narasu also comes back to the room.

"So, how is it?"

"Yeah, it's a message from Dina, it's about the reason she's sealed, also there is something she wanted to talk to me"

"So, that's it. But now, Dina-sama is....."

She stops her sentence there as if it's hard to continue.

"Anything wrong? Do I can't meet her?"

Narasu hesitates whether she want to says it or not, but looking at Souta who looking at her with a serious expression, she decides to start talking.

"The royal family once gathered skilled magicians to undo Dina-sama seal around 700 hundred years ago, it, unfortunately, ends up in failure."

"If it's that, I heard it already from Carena, although it's not as detailed as what you said just now."

"That's natural, the story comes from when she was not born yet, right now, there are only a few who remember it in detail."

"So it failed, I understand that, but is that connected to why I can not meet her?"

Souta asks the question to return to the topic that almost derails.

"To undo the seal, the country was doing a large scale ceremony, so failing

that destroy the reputation of the royal family. To remedy the situation, the minister at the time said 'Curse, a curse has made the seal stronger!'."

"What a fool....."

"Yes, it was stupid, but the king at that time hopped on board with that remark, and as a result, Dina-sama was labeled as cursed, and she was sealed in the back of the cave further west from here."

"Wha-What did you say? ... Tell me the place, I will go."

Chapter 49

"Wha-What did you say? ... Tell me the place, I will go there."

"I hesitated to speak because I knew you would say so..... It's been 700 years, that little cave with few monsters in it has completely changed now."

"I feel like I've heard that several times now... oh well... I'm aware of the danger, I'll go."

Looking at Souta's firm determination, Narasu sighs, feeling that stopping him now is useless.

"Hahhh there's no choice, I will go with you. I'll guide you there."

"No, isn't it dangerous? I'll go alone, just tell me the location."

"I can't let Arezel's benefactor go to such a dangerous place alone."

"Souta-san, my master is a former A-rank adventurer, she's actually really-really-really-reeaaally strong!"

Although it's not about herself, Arezel looks so proud somehow.

"Besides, the road to that cave is restricted now, if I come with you however, I can grant us an entry permit to that cave easily."

"I will be grateful if you come along then... but I'm curious, why both of you get preferential treatment in the inspection? Or does it actually apply for all elves?" Narasu stares at Arezel's face, the person herself is sweating profusely from her forehead despite her smile.

"Arezel ... You've accompanied Souta-dono for quite some time now since he helped you. Did you never explain it?"

"No, I mean, I thought I should say something, but.... if I keep it a secret and say it later, I thought it would be quite a surprise, isn't it fine?"

"Fine you say? No, it's not! Geez, this girl is so..... Hahh, I will explain it."

She drops her powerful stare from Arezel, and then returns her gaze to Souta.

"There were many alchemists in this country long ago, but non-elven alchemists were forced to leave the country because of the Iyashi Tree leaves incident."

Souta nods and urges her to continue.

"Among the elven alchemists, there are some that were caught helping other races, those people who help the spillage of the Iyashi Tree leaves were already exported out of the country."

"Is Carena one of them?"

Narasu shakes her head.

"That child simply feels disgusted by the closed nature of this country and left on her own..... In a sense, you can say she's helping other races."

Arezel moves closer to Souta. He pauses for a while and lends his ears to her. "Carena-sama's husband is of the human race, and because of that, they both eloped to human territory."

"Arezel, you should not say anything unnecessary, even if that is the case."

As Narasu warns her, she lets out a small scream and then hides behind Souta's back.

"Let's continue. Because of that, the alchemists remaining in the country continue to decline, and from that scarcity, we received certain rights."

"Why not just take many disciples to increase the number quickly?"

Souta asks about the obvious solution to the problem.

"In the first place, elves are long-lived, therefore, their awareness to leave descendant is much weaker than of the human race. Because of that our population are small, and from that small population, only some want to learn alchemy."

"I think the country should support the motion more, or is it also because of the racial nature?"

"Alchemist requests don't happen every day, I guess the sense of crisis is weak with me still around now."

"Well, I understand the circumstances. So since Arezel is not an official alchemist, her right is more limited than Narasu, huh."

Arezel turns her face down, her shoulders slump.

"Since there is a prospect, it will be up to the future training. At the same time, I also need to be more cautious."

When they see Arezel, despite looking down, her face is full of spirit.

"That's why I believe we can enter the cave if I go with you. I also want to meet Dina-sama as my ulterior motive, so I will be happy if I can take you

there."

"Me too! I also want to go!! I also want to meet Dina-sama!"

While Narasu explains her reason for wanting to go, Arezel also voices her thoughts.

"No, that place is too dangerous for Arezel. You were just kidnapped not long ago, have somewhat of a sense of crisis."

Narasu says so, appealing for Arezel.

"B-But but but Uuu~... No good? But Souta-san and master are strong aren't you? so it's fine, right? right?"

She knows her master won't budge from her plea, so she moves her gaze to Souta.

"No is no. Let me say this clearly, if you can't protect yourself then you will just become a burden."

"N-No way, you don't have to say it like that..."

Unexpectedly receiving strong denial, Arezel's eyes become teary.

"Listen, we can't always protect you every time there's danger. If it's only you then it's fine, but do you think Narasu will do nothing if you're in danger, regardless of her own situation? "

Understanding what Souta tries to imply, Arezel shakes her head while holding back her tears.

"Right? At that time Narasu will desperately try to help you. She might be seriously injured, so we can protect you, but this will be the outcome. Even so, is it okay?"

"No, no."

Her voice is strained and look as if she is talking with nasal voice.

"Would you wait for us here? Anyway, once we rescue Dina, we'll come back here anyway, and so you can meet her then. I want you to prepare so we can rest at ease when we come back."

Souta strokes Arezel's head.

"..... Yes! I will wait."

Narasu lowers her head from the angle where Arezel can't see her.

"Well then, can you prepare yourself Narasu? We will depart once you're ready."

"Yeah, I'll fetch the equipment."

When Souta tried to pull back his hand, she asks him to keep stroking, in the end, Souta keeps stroking Arezel's head until Narasu returns.

Chapter 50

“Souta-dono, sorry to keep you waiting ... Arezel, cut it out, Souta-dono is troubled.”

“Hauu, I’m sorry.”

Arezel jumps back immediately.

“That equipment looks pretty good.”

A rapier is on her waist, and the chainmail she wears is woven with mithril silver, on top of which is a thin coat filled with magic power.

Her gauntlet covers as far as her wrist, knee pads, shoes and other equipment, are all made with mithril.

“Since I’ve not gone adventuring for a while now, I’ll use this one. It’s been awhile since I found a chance to use this.”

“That rapier doesn’t look like mithril one, but it seems like the stronger one.”

Narasu looks surprised.

“Indeed it is. This is based on orichalcum, it was made by mixing other metal with mithril. That also gives it the ability to penetrate magic power.”

“Mixing multiple metals..... It must have been created by a blacksmith with considerable skill. When it comes to making this kind of thing...”

Narasu pulls out the rapier and shows it to Souta.

“Yes, this is created by the descendant of the dwarven hero of the seven heroes.”

“If that’s the case, I’m convinced. If that person has his blood, then there is no doubt what that person make will be good.”

“Err, the price is also considerable...”

Narasu remembers the price, there is a distant look in her eyes.

“Well, the material is a one-of-a-kind, so... Anyway, are you ready? Shall we depart now?”

“Yes, that’s right. The place is not that far, but there is a checkpoint along the way that you need to pass through, the place is blocked at night, so let’s go.”

Once they leave the room, Souta begins to prepare Ed and the carriage right

away.

Although the cave is not that far away from the workshop, Souta decides to ride the carriage there considering they need to bring back Dina on the way back.

Following the preparation, the two get into the carriage.

“Please take care both of you.”

Arezel says no more than that, away from the carriage.

“Yes, we will bring back Dina, so look forward to it.”

“When Rouri comes back, tell her the circumstances in my stead.”

“Understood!”

They head right after they left the workshop, they reach the west gate of the city shortly after.

The check at the gate finishes without problems, and they keep going along the road until they reach a branching path.

“Which way should I go?”

“To the right. There is a small village if you go to the left.”

After going to the right just like what Narasu said, a guard’s post is visible not long after.

“Excuse me, please stop your carriage.”

They’re stopped by the guard. His polite attitude doesn’t change even when he sees Souta.

“There is only a sealed cave ahead, what kind of business do you have here?”

Before Souta can say anything, Narasu starts to explain.

“I’m Narasu, an alchemist, the person here is my travel companion, Souta-dono. We came here for a task we need to do in that sealed cave, can we pass through?”

Hearing that, the guard straightens his back more and corrects his attitude, though his attitude was never sloppy to begin with.

“I-I apologize for my rudeness. To not recognize Narasu-sama.....”

“No, your reception is more than enough, I’d rather get our traffic approval than that.”

“Yes, immediately!”

The guard enters the guard’s post, after explaining the thing, he comes back with his superior.

The guard superior is thin, he also gives an impression of being scared.

“Na-Narasu-sama, about going to that sealed cave, that place is.....”
“It’s fine, I know it’s a dangerous place, I also know there is necessary procedure to enter.”

Before the guard’s superior finishes talking, Narasu cuts him off with everything he wants to say.

“A-As expected of Narasu-sama, and for the companion, who in the world are you? Seems like you’re a human.”

He asks the question while choosing his word carefully so he doesn’t break Narasu’s mood.

Souta only shrugs, leaving the explanation to Narasu.
“This is my friend, I’m accompanying him to go to the cave this time.”
“Su-Such thing...”
“Also, is there any problem with him being a human.”

In that place, only the superior has Elven Supremacy mindset. The guard and Narasu look unamused.

Souta just stands there without a care as if the whole situation has nothing to do with him.

“N-No, it’s fine because he’s Narasu-sama companion. Both of you can pass.”
He quickly opens the path, large bead of sweats can be seen on the superior’s face, all because of Narasu’s gaze.

“Now then, excuse us.”

Narasu signaling to Souta to depart with a nod, Souta then uses the reins to tell Ed to depart.

“Fuu~, that shaved off some years from my life span.”
The guard superior is rooted in place.

“She’s beautiful, but intimidating at the same time.”

“Ahh, it totally feels like I stepped on the tail of the wolf.”

“It’s because captain said things like that.”

Even after Souta and Narasu left, there is a strange feeling of tension surrounding the two.

After going straight for a while, Souta and Narasu finally reach the cave.

“This is..... Is this the procedure you mentioned a while back?”

“Yes, we must do something about this first.”

The cave is sealed with strong magic, there is barrier wall surrounding it.

“Can Narasu break this barrier?”

“Yes, I can, though it will take a while... It is difficult if I need to immediately open it with my magic power.”

“If so, should I do it?”

Souta takes a step forward and puts magic power in his hand.

“Wa-Wait a minute, for my magical power is certainly tough, but if we use this, we should manage somehow!”

Narasu pulls out a dagger and thrusts it into the barrier.

Then the barrier opens without any resistance.

Chapter 51

The barrier is opened by Narasu's dagger.

"Is it a magic item?"

"Yeah, I made this. It's dull, so it can't be used as normal weapon, instead it's specialized in cutting barrier created by magic power."

While talking, Narasu continues working to make enough space for a person to go through the barrier.

"Once we enter, I will close the barrier again, so it might be better for horse-kun to wait in front of the barrier."

"I probably should remove the carriage so you can move easily if something happens."

Souta then stores the carriage inside the dimensional storage after removing the carriage from Ed.

"Ed, you will be house sitting again, is that fine?"

Ed nods indicating that it's a matter of course, and then moves to a place off the road with plenty of grass around and sits there.

"Ed is clever, it looks capable of holding conversation with Souta-dono."

"It has been like this since the first time we met, it's like he can understand all my words."

Souta sends a glance at Ed, noticing that, Ed nods again

"It's amazing..."

"Because he's my partner. Anyway, we should hurry."

Souta urges Narasu while point to the gap on the barrier.

"You're right, let's go then."

After they pass the barrier, Narasu turns around to close the barrier.

There's no indication showing that it's difficult to do at all, Narasu fills the magic power on the dagger, and then traces the gap with the handle of the dagger instead of the cutting edge this time.

"This dagger can cut open a barrier and also repair it."

"It's convenient to be able to enter and exit the barrier without having to cancel

it..... How do you pass the barrier normally? There's no way everyone has that dagger, right?"

"Normally people come to my place to borrow this dagger, or there is a way to break it with magic power just like what Souta-dono intended to do before. But regardless of your method, you also need to restore it afterward."

When the restoration is over, she turns around and answers.

"Other than that, there are many magic items, there should be others that can be used here too."

"Still, that dagger should be still the easiest way, there is an obligation to restore the barrier after all."

Narasu nods, put the dagger back to its sheathe, and hands it to Souta.

"I still have a couple of them, I will give this one to Souta-dono. It's quite convenient."

"I appreciate it, the usability does look good."

Souta considers another way to use it beside the way Narasu showed him.

Souta puts away the dagger in the dimensional storage and then takes out Izayoi and breast plate and then equip them.

"Well then, shall we proceed?"

Once they enter the cave, Souta feels a sense of deja-vu.

"This feeling... It's the same with the feeling I got in the forest where I and Arezel met."

"I wonder if something is happening..... I hope it's nothing."

They stop their feet to observe the darkness around them, but it's just a quiet darkness.

"First of all, we need to do something about this darkness."

Souta puts magic on his hand and creates a ball of light that lights up the surroundings and lets it float a bit ahead of them.

The light is somewhat dim, but it's still bright enough to see the surroundings just fine.

"I know the way, but this is better than being attacked in darkness."

"That's right, the possibility of missing a trap also decreases."

They proceed forward while relying on the light.

The ball of light also moves while keeping the same distance away from them.

"How deep is this place?"

"When I checked about two hundred years ago, it had 20 layers. Since then, I don't know if it's expanded again or not."

"Where is Dina?"

"... I'm sure she's on the tenth layer."

"Then I'll do something real quick."

To increase their pace by reducing the amount of time they need to stop, Souta releases his magic power mixed with intimidation to reduce the number of monsters they need to encounter on the way.

"Wow, that is awesome magic power, in this case weak monsters won't approach."

"I'm going to run, follow me."

As Souta said, he starts to run with Izayoi in his right hand.

In a closed space like a cave, it's easy to read the flow of the wind. Using wind magic, Souta knows the rough layout of the cave.

That's why, without any hesitation on his feet, Souta runs to the stairs to the lower layer in straight line.

Along the way, they can see monsters that too late to escape, such monsters along with the monsters that attacking them all get cut down by Izayoi.

"To such a degree ... I don't think my turn will come."

Narasu showing a wry smile.

"Did you say something?"

Asks Souta without stopping his hands and feet or his speed falling at all.

Second floor, third floor, fourth floor..... they keep going without any hardship whatsoever.

Some powerful monsters appear on the way, but they are also not on the level where they can match Narasu or Souta at all.

Some also endured Souta's blow, but end up killed by the next blow from Narasu.

In the meantime the two of them advance without saying a word.

Souta doesn't feel like striking up idle conversation while going to his destination, Narasu on the other hand is desperately trying to not fall behind from Souta with his astounding speed.

Reaching the stairs to the tenth floor, Souta stops.

"To be able to keep up, as expected of former A-rank adventurer."

"Hahh hahh, it's... just barely."

Narasu is only able to say that much before continuing to try to catching her breath.

"Fuhh~, Never did I imagine we will run through everything at once without a break."

"It's just a straight line on each floor, so I thought it wouldn't take that long, right?"

Narasu slumps her shoulder hearing Souta's answer.

"Hahhh, well that's right, but ... I understand well how out of the standard Souta-dono is now."

"According to you, Dina is on the next floor ... I can feel strong magic power even from here."

"Yes, it's uncomparable to the enemies so far."

Souta puts down a pair of furs in front of the stairs and sit down there.

"For now, let's take a break before we continue."

Souta pours the tea into a cup and then offers it to Narasu who sits down across of him.

"You should be tired, I put some Iyashi Tree leaves in this tea."

"!?"

Knowing the price of the Iyashi Tree leaves, Narasu almost spurts out the tea in her mouth, but realizing it would be a waste, she quickly swallows it instead.

"Once upon a time, I met a person who had a large amount of this. I never thought it would become such valuable thing."

Iyashi Tree leaf is used as a material for various medicines, and by itself it has great effect for recovering fatigue.

"Tha-That's right, I'm just a bit surprised because recently the circulation in the country is also small."

Narasu wipes her mouth and think about the rarity of the drink she has on her hands.

"After you finish drinking it, Dina rescue operation will start."

Souta's gaze is directed downstairs.....

Chapter 52

After they finish the tea, Souta gives Narasu some items.

"I'll give this to you just in case. Just to be sure, this is restoration medicine, this is magic recovery medicine, and this one is a medicine that increases your physical abilities temporarily if you drink it."

"Thank you very much ... but, this is a highly effective one, isn't it? And it's using the recipe that uses Iyashi Tree leaves too."

There are two of each, Narasu puts them inside her magic bag one by one in sequential order. [t/n: probably based on Souta's explanation order]

"Yes, are there other recipes used now? Based on the conversation from before, it seems that there are quite a few usages of those leaves before... Well, that was made a long time ago, so don't mind and just use it."

Souta says another thing as a follow-up so Narasu won't mind about the value.

"Use it without worrying about the value, Arezel will be sad if something happens to you while you hold back."

Narasu also prepared medicine and the like, and considered using them because they're cheaper, albeit have weaker effect than what Souta gave her.

"Yes, I will gratefully use them."

However, once Souta mentions Arezel, Narasu changes her mind.

Once Souta puts the furs back to dimensional storage, the two head to the stairs.

They can feel the magic power rising with every step they take.

Once they reach the bottom, they come out at a wide space. A large Demon Crystal can be seen in the back.

"..... That's the crystal sealing Dina?"

The crystal reflects the light, making what's inside impossible to see, but there is nothing resembling a crystal that can be seen beside it.

"Most likely... but..."

Monsters fill their lines of sight.

And further back there is a three-headed hydra.

"So we need to do a bit cleaning first huh?.... Narasu, how much can you handle?"

"Let's see, I think I can handle the monsters in the vicinity. Just..... the central one is a little too much for me."

Narasu calmly analyzes her strength and enemies' strength, and then tells it to Souta.

"Then..... I'll be that big thing's opponent. I'll reduce the number of small fry on my way to it, I will leave the rest to you."

"What do you.....! Wha-Wha-What is that!?"

Narasu who tries to reply can't believe her eyes.

Ten fireballs and the same number of ice balls are floating around Souta.

"Magic of opposite element at the same time!? Moreover, that amount!!"

"Here I come!!"

Along with the shout, magics fly at their enemies.

Narasu is pursuing the magic path only with her eyes, but Souta runs chasing his own magic.

When the fireballs hit, they break up into smaller fireballs and attack the monsters one after another.

As for the ice balls, ice vines grow from the impact zone, the vines grow rapidly. They swallow the monsters one by one, freezing them in place.

With that, half of the monsters there have been defeated.

During all of that, Souta plunges into the rank of their enemies without minding the blast.

The monsters that don't take magic damage or those that take damage but are still able to fight, try to block Souta's path.

"Out of the way."

However, Souta kills them easily with the already drawn Izayoi.

The sword cuts the monsters in half like a hot knife through butter.

However, there are some monsters with hardened skin, in that case, Izayoi is stopped on that skin.

Realizing that the blade stopped, Souta changes the angle of his slash quickly to slash at other monsters.

"Wow....."

Narasu's mouth is gaping open as she watches Souta's fight. However, once she sees the cut off monsters behind Souta, she realizes she also needs to do her task.

"Hahhh! I have to go too!"

Narasu unsheathes her rapier and runs after Souta hurriedly.

There is a path made by Souta's relentless attack, Narasu starts attacking the monsters that stray from that path.

"Seii!"

Considering the characteristics of her weapon, Narasu is unable to cut monsters into two like Souta, but she takes the monsters' lives by attacking their weak points.

Monsters that Souta fails to cut in half also take some damage when she pierces the injured part.

"With this!"

Just when the rapier pierces deep into the monster's body, she casts fire magic using the rapier as a medium.

Not long after she pulls her rapier and take some distance from the monster, the magic activates and the body of that monster is blown apart.

"Not bad, guess that rank isn't just for show."

While confirming Narasu's movement, Souta keeps on defeating enemies. His body is dirty with from the blood of the monsters, but he pays no heed to it. However, as the filth on the blade edge affects the sharpness of it, he uses magic to take off the stain once in awhile.

And so, Souta reaches under the Hydra.

"Finally, It's your turn."

The Hydra is positioned in a place where it can easily guard the Demon Crystal where Dinarius is sealed.

"My bad, but I have some business with the thing behind you. I'll take you out quickly."

Souta switches Izayoi with the Dragon Decapitation Sword that he takes out of the dimensional storage.

He runs straight to the center head but is blocked by another head that tries

to bite him from the side.

Avoiding that, the other head also attacks, and the center head shoots its breath at where Souta was going to move to.

Souta avoids a direct hit by putting up a magic barrier, but he's still blown back quite a distance.

"Not bad, especially for a guard dog."

The hydra doesn't move an inch even though Souta is quite a distance away, it keeps its position in front of the Demon Crystal, it's obvious that it's there to protect it.

"How about magic?"

Souta makes the same fireballs and iceballs as before and shots the fireballs at the right neck.

The iceball goes toward the left head, while Souta runs to the center head. However, since magic itself is beginner level magic, it's not effective on the Hydra, and so Souta needs to take distance again.

Souta thinks that if he uses more advanced magic, there is a risk that the surroundings will also be swallowed by it.

And even if it's possible to increase the magic so it becomes high-rank magic during effect optimization, the feeling of released magic is weak.

"Fuu~, Now then, what to do..... I won't say it's a stalemate, but it's quite strong."

Assuming there are 20 levels, it's unusual for a monster of this caliber to show up halfway down like this.

Chapter 53

"Fuu~, Now then, what to do..... I won't say it's a stalemate, but it's quite strong."

After taking a distance, Souta enters a fighting stances again, brandishing his Dragon Decapitation Sword, but the Hydra doesn't pursue him.

"This thing only attacks the one that approaches the Demon Crystal..... Then." Souta turns his back to the Hydra, and heads toward Narasu.

"Narasu, that big thing won't do anything unless you get close. First, let's clean up the small fry!"

Souta casts magic to defeat the far off enemies, while using his sword to cut down the ones nearby.

On the other hand, Narasu sweats profusely, her face is filled with fatigue, she can't afford to reply to Souta now.

Although not long has passed since the start of the battle, the place is overflowing with the corpse of monsters.

"They're starting to get in the way."

To secure his foothold, Souta puts away the body of the monsters in the dimensional storage.

By the time Narasu reaches Souta, the monsters have been reduced to about a fifth of their original number.

"Are you okay?"

"Hahh hahh, somehow."

Narasu answers while wielding her sword, on her body, there is no trace of significant damage, only minor scratches here and there.

"Here."

Souta spills the recovery medicine he takes out on Narasu.

"What are you doing !?"

She is surprised from suddenly spilled by liquid, but as the small pains that eating her disappear, she notices that it's a recovery medicine.

"I appreciate that, but say something beforehand next time!"

Surprisingly, the wounds actually hindered Narasu's movement more than she thought, as her attacks become sharper than before.

"Your movement recovered, drink this too, by the way."

While giving the small bottle to Narasu, Souta swings his sword to attack enemies behind her.

"This is?"

"Physical recovery medicine. It's probably also not created now."

The medicine is purple, Narasu hesitates for a moment and then swallow it all in one gulp.

"Ueeeeee."

The taste is so terrible that she unexpectedly raises such a voice, but the medicine work as the feeling of exhaustion disappears from her body.

"Interesting voice you made there."

"..... Tell nobody about it."

When that back and forth exchange happen, they confront the monsters once again.

Although countless monsters have been defeated so far, Souta still hasn't even received a scratch from them, in addition, he also stores the defeated monsters in his dimensional storage to secure their footing.

Among the monsters that's being defeated one after another, there is a monster that stops Souta's Izayoi before, but as the Dragon Decapitation sword is sharper, the blade goes through the monster's body and cuts it in two.

The movement of Narasu also become sharper as she pierces monsters one after another.

When aligning their back, Souta applies body strengthening magic from enchant magic to Narasu.

"Almost time, I guess. Narasu, pull back for now!"

"!? Yes!!"

Narasu is surprised by Souta's voice for a moment. Souta looks at the movement of the monsters and sees what he wants to do and then pull back. The monsters are gathering in one place chasing Souta and Narasu.

Souta confirms that most monsters other than the hydra are gathered and turns his back.

"Let's go!"

"Yes!"

Narasu creates a fire storm, an intermediate fire magic, while Souta makes twenty fireballs and simultaneously releases them at the group of monsters.

The monsters are getting caught by the fire storm, some monsters are able to escape in the nick of time, but they get struck down by Souta's fireball instead. Swallowed in the blast, most of the monsters in the area are defeated.

"With this, this place is cleared."

"Eeee~ There are so many things doesn't make sense now..... But I guess we still have things to do."

Compared to Narasu's fire storm, the strength of the fireballs Souta fired to the monsters is clearly stronger.

"Leave the things you're worrying about until we finish that big thing."

"I know right."

They move their line of sight to the Hydra.

"I'll tell you what I found out about it while fighting. Naturally, each of the three head moves freely, and the magic resistances of the left and right heads are high, while the center head has powerful breath attack."

You understand so far? Receiving Souta's glance that seems to ask that, Narasu nods.

"Next is his range of action, it seems it's restricted to the area around the Demon Crystal, as it didn't chase after me when I was blown away."

"That Hydra is protecting it..... is that what you mean?"

"Either that, or it's trying to prevent the seal from getting unsealed, I wonder which it is."

"I don't think a monster has such a will....."

Narasu shows a dubious expression.

"That's not a far of a stretch that it instinctively protects the object which let it grows so far considering the magic power that leaks out from the Demon Crystal. The other possibility is someone is manipulating it... but it doesn't seem like it."

There is no abnormality from Souta's appraisal result.

"For the time being, I'll fight the two heads, can I leave the last one to you?"

"Understand, let's do it somehow."

"I leave it to you then."

Souta puts his hand on Narasu's shoulder and then reapplies the body strengthening magic.

Once she feels that her body become lighter, she runs toward the Hydra.
"Here I go."

In the right hand of Souta who is chasing Narasu one step behind is Dragon Decapitation sword, while in the other hand is his mithril sword.

Narasu heads toward the right head, Souta shoots magic at the left head to direct its attention while he himself goes toward the center head.

Going through the blast, the left head tries to bite Souta, but Souta keeps avoiding it while trying to slash at the center head.

However, the breath is already stored in the center head's mouth, and it's about to get released now.

"I'm not going to receive that many times."

Souta throws a mithril sword imbued with ice magic at the Hydra's open mouth. The Hydra tries to break it, which is achieved in a sense, the sword crushed to pieces in its mouth.

"Guess so, but."

Souta snaps his fingers, and not long after that, the ice magic in the sword releases, locking the mouth closed with ice.

By not letting it open, the breath which has gathered in its mouth explodes, burning the soft inner side of its mouth.

"If attacked from inside, the damage will be great too."

With this, one of the three heads withdraws from the front.

While Souta and Narasu are each fighting one head, Narasu in particular is having a hard time.

Narasu's strategy is to avoid an attack and strike the enemy on the weak point using the gap it makes when attacking.

However, the hydra's skin is hard enough that Narasu's attack is unable to pierce it and only leaves a small scratch on the skin surface.

Souta throws another sword at the left head hoping to do the same thing as

he did with the center neck, but as the three head share information with each other, the left head avoids the sword instead.

"As expected, it wouldn't try to eat it more than once."

Souta thought it would be easier if it could be defeated the same way as the center head, but in the end, he decides to fight it head on this time.

He keeps avoiding the Hydra's attack while looking for a chance, by the time the attacks exceed ten, it releases a powerful attack, stronger than every attack it did until now.

Souta sets his sword, aiming for a counter in accordance to the bite attack.

Knowing for sure there is no magic power in the sword, the Hydra ignores it thinking that it can break the sword with its teeth like before.

However, against the hardness of Dragon Decapitation sword, Hydra's teeth are the ones that are crushed instead.

"Gyaooooooooooo."

Although it bends its head backward from the pain, Souta jumps, chasing after the mouth and tears the mouth from the sky as it is.

"This is the second one."

Souta pierces the second head, giving it a finishing blow, after that he looks at the last head that is fighting Narasu.

Chapter 54

Souta pierces the second head, giving it a finishing blow, and after that, he looks at the last head that's fighting Narasu.

It looks like Narasu hurt her leg, as her movement lacks its previous fluidity. She uses her rapier like a cane to make up for the loss of mobility from her injury.

The Hydra spits out acidic liquid, and it's aimed at Narasu's leg.
"Kuh!"

She avoids it somehow, but every time she moves, the wounds slowly gets larger.

As it only has one head left, the processing speed that originally split into three now fused back into one, and the movement of Hydra is better than it was in the beginning skirmish.

Acid flies to the spot where Narasu going to land.
"Guhh!"

She tries to move right away, but the pain in her leg is preventing that. Narasu closes her eyes as if she's praying, ready to receive the acid attack. However, Souta embraces Narasu, preventing the acid from hitting her with his barrier.

"You endured it well, leave the rest to me."
After moving Narasu away from the Hydra, Souta goes back to the Hydra. As Souta approaches the Hydra, it spews more acid.

Unlike the breath from the middle head, it seems like there is no need to accumulate the acid in its mouth first, the Hydra spits out acid at Souta one after another.

"It didn't spit out acid in the first round, what does that mean?"
In the first round of fighting, it, together with the left head, only attacked by biting at Souta.

Of course, no answer comes from the Hydra. It only keeps attacking Souta with acid.

Hydra's heads have different breath on each one, however, since the magic needed to produce the breath comes from the body, only one head can use the breath.

After becoming a seven-headed hydra, its magic power would also grow larger, making it possible to use the breath with two or more heads. But for a three-headed hydra, this is the limit.

"If this keeps going, I won't have any footholds..... Should I end it soon?" Just like when fighting the Ancient Dragon, Souta fills his sword with Ice magic power.

The swung sword hits the acid, freezing it. It then drops to the ground as a single lump without splashing other acids.

As the distance between them shrinks, Souta throws an iron sword he takes out of the Dimensional Storage.

The right head avoids it with ease, but as it evades that sword, Souta throws another iron sword.

While the Hydra also avoids this one, it gives priority to evasion, effectively stopping the rapid fire acid attack.

Souta keeps throwing weapons at the Hydra as a counter attack: swords, daggers, spears, axes, and so forth. He throws anything he can grab from his Dimensional Storage.

The throwing speed far exceeds what a normal person is capable of, not to mention each and every weapon thrown at the Hydra is imbued with magic.

The Hydra can't avoid all the attacks from Souta, those attacks deal some damage to the Hydra.

Souta gets closer to the Hydra while throwing the weapons.

The throwing ceases, realizing that the Hydra is trying to block with the remains of its left head while the right head is trying to spit more acid, Souta jumps, bringing him to the right head's eye level.

"It'll be bad if it uses the breath and acid at the same time!"

Souta uses his sword to pierce the right head and then releases the magic power inside it.

Not even able to voice its death throes, the head is encased in ice, and the left head also stops moving and falls at the same time.

"Fuhh, this thing was pretty strong. That was the first time I fought a dragon with multiple heads..... That went fairly well, I guess?"
After looking at the remains of the Hydra for a while, Souta goes to check on Narasu.

Narasu just finished applying restoration medicine she got from Souta on her injured leg.

"Souta-dono, thanks for the hard work. My apologies, in the end it's you who fought all three heads..... I'm just a burden for you."

Saying that, Narasu's head droops.

"I don't mind, it was thanks to Narasu fighting the other head that I could concentrate on the rest. What matters, in the end, is the result."

It's the truth, but the fact that she couldn't beat the opponent assigned to her and ended up being helped by Souta puts a weight on her mind.

"..... If you say so. Anyway, a little help please."

However, the words squeezed out of her mouth don't deny Souta's words.

"Next is, Dina. I have to release her soon."

Grasping Souta's extended hand, Narasu stands up.

"Right, as I've only ever heard the story, I'm looking forward to talk to her."

Because the crystal was originally stored in the king's castle, it's the first time for Narasu, who hadn't attended the unsealing ceremony to see it directly.

Avoiding the collapsed Hydra, they both approach the crystal, and Narasu gasps in surprise as they get closer to it.

First, the size of the crystal was unclear from distance, but it's big enough for it to be able to reach the ceiling from the floor.

Next is the sight of the sealed Dinarius, whose beauty gives off a translucent feeling. She looks fragile, but for some reason looks full of vitality.

"This is... Dina-sama."

The impression Narasu gets from looking at her is one that contradicts itself.

"Dinarius, it's been a long time. For you to confine yourself in this place for so long, are you stupid or what... If Soldia knows, he might destroy the country himself you know."

On Souta's face, various emotions such as anger from what Dinarius did, sorrow from remembering a friend he can never meet again, and joy from able to

reunite, can be seen, but in the end, he reaches out to the crystal with a smile on his face.

"I'll free you now."

The crystal is sealed, and the key of unsealing is the Memory Stone that Dinarius holds in her hands.

Souta pours his magic into the crystal while imagining a connection for his magic power to reach the Memory Stone.

The magic power gathers on the Memory Stone and slowly spreads to the entirety of the Demon Crystal.

The number of people needed to unseal a crystal usually increases in proportion to the size of the crystal because the magic needed also increases, however, Souta provides the magic needed by himself.

Once magic power fills the entire crystal, the crystal emits a sound with the crack that appears on it.

The seal gradually disappears, and Dinarius slowly emerges from the crystal. While waiting for that, a sound different from the sound of the crystal suddenly can be heard from behind the two.

"GROAAAAAAAAARRRRR!!!!"

The Hydra that should've been defeated earlier raises itself and roars.

Souta needs to keep adding magic to the crystal, while Narasu is still not fully recovered from her injury, and in the first place, it will hard for her to fight it herself.

The left and right heads are nowhere to be seen, they seem to have fused with the center head.

"That thing is.... This is quite a pinch."

Souta turns his eyes to the Hydra, and sweat can be seen flowing on his forehead.

Chapter 55

"That thing is.... This is quite a pinch."

Souta turns his eyes to the Hydra, and sweat can be seen flowing on his forehead.

"I-I will try to buy some time somehow..... Souta-dono, quickly save Dina-sama."

Narasu moves to the space between the crystal and Hydra and goes into the fighting stance with her rapier, intending to protect Souta and Dina.

"Stop it, it's not an opponent you can handle, you'll just die in vain."

Still Narasu doesn't move from her spot.

"That's.... I can't do."

She shakes her head while keeping her eyes locked onto the Hydra.

"This is also to repay the favor from when you saved Arezel!"

With firm determination, Narasu faces the Hydra with a rapier fully filled with magic power in her hand.

When the Hydra who raised its head and roared calms down, it moves its sight to the crystal it's protecting.

It's cracked, the seal is likely to be broken sooner or later.

"GROOOOAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA"

Noticing that, the Hydra is furious, while roaring, it tries to attack Souta and Narasu.

Without changing her stance, Narasu casts magic.

"Windstorm!"

Narasu tries to stop the Hydra's movement by casting wind magic and then strike with the rapier with the gap created, however nevermind stopped, it doesn't even slowed down.

The Hydra sets off Narasu's magic with its own magic power and heads toward Narasu as if nothing happened.

Although the blow from its fangs is blocked by her rapier, both her hands are numbed and the rapier falls from her hands.

"Guhh, how powerful is it..."

Forcing herself, Narasu tries to pick up the rapier she dropped, but as she does so, an attack using its tail comes from the side.

"Guahhhh"

Narasu is able to pick up her rapier and defend herself, but she can't stop the momentum and is thrown onto the wall.

"Sou-Souta-dono..... I'm sorry....."

She's still conscious, but as she tries to raise her body, she falls again. Although she is still conscious, she has received a great deal of damage.

"Narasu This is bad, but.... I refuse to stay still and let you do as you wish!"
While putting magic to the crystal by his right hand, Souta throws weapons he takes out from Dimensional Storage with his left hand.

Due to his posture, the power and speed are poor, especially when compared to his attack against the right head from before.

Without magic power infused to them, the attack won't deal any damage to the Hydra, it will just hit its skin and bump off.

By stopping the magic power injection, Souta will be able to focus on the battle and win, but even so, he doesn't stop.

With the seal only solved this far, stopping the unsealing process might affect Dinarius negatively, with that in his mind, he can't stop and takes the risk.

The Hydra pulls its head back, on a closer inspection, there is an almost exploded breath stored in its mouth.

The breath of the central head, the acid solution of the right head, the mysterious breath of the right head.

With all three breaths unleashed as one, it won't be hard to imagine the outcome, even if they can avoid death, they will still take major damage.

Souta quickly chooses the best action he can do.
He focusing all the magic power in his body on his hand, furthermore, he also takes the magic power on the air around him and inject them all to the Demon Crystal at the rate incomparable than before.
Souta also injects the magic power needed to maintain his defense. This seems like a suicidal act, but the last thing Souta want is for them to get caught in the breath attack and killed.

"Dina..... Wake up!!!"

The crystal glows brighter, and large crack forms in the middle of the crystal. The air from outside that reaches Dinarius seems to quicken the unsealing process.

Just right when the breath is released, the crystal breaks apart. The seal that sealed Dina breaks, but at the same time the breath is released towards Souta.

Souta tries to make a barrier to protect them, but with his magic exhausted, he's only barely able to stand.

"I'm sorry Dina, I can get you out from the seal, but it seems I can't protect you..."

Dina who was just released from the seal falls on the spot, still unconscious. Just as Souta think the situation is hopeless, a voice resounds.

"Don't give up!"

Just like before, someone stands between Souta and Hydra. It's neither Narasu nor Dina, it's a woman Souta never seen before, but despite that, the face of this elf woman seems familiar. She already used a recovery potion to the previously collapsed Narasu. Now able to move, Narasu gives Souta a Magic recovery potion.

"With this!!!"

She uses dozens of magic stones and fires her magic gun at the Hydra. Magic gun can shoot magic bullets with power depending on the quality and quantity of the magic stones loaded. It's disposable because the gun barrel could not withstand the power, it's hardly used. However, she uses many first-grade magic stones without holding back. The magic bullet fired from the gun has enough power to swallow the Hydra together with its released breath whole.

Souta makes a barrier to keep the aftermath of the magic gun from reaching them, but they can still feel the vibration and the blast created.

Besides destroying the Hydra, the magic bullet also makes a big hole on the wall far behind the Hydra.

Despite able to save Dina, Souta and Narasu's minds are occupied by the

surprise from seeing such an absurd attack.

"Ahh, errr.... I wonder if I overdid it a little?"

'That's not a little!' That retort comes from both Narasu and Souta at the same time.

"Umm, there is no accident and everyone safe. so it's fine right? Isn't it right Master?"

She laughs at Narasu while sticking out her tongue.

"Hahhh, you never change... It's true that we're saved, but remember about moderation."

Narasu lightly pokes Roury's head.

"Waiii~ I'm sorry."

There's no sign of guilt on that face.

"Souta-dono, I will introduce her, she's Carenalien's daughter, and Elmia's mother, Roury."

"Nice to meet you!"

Because of her carefree attitude, Souta's mouth hangs open from the surprise, he can't believe the person in front of him is related by blood to those two.

"I understand that you're surprised, but they're really connected by blood... probably."

"Ehhhh~ Master is so mean! I'm really the daughter of my mom, and I'm also really the mother of Elmia-chan!!"

"... This is a mother with one child? Well, I guess she is, the person herself says so, and I certainly can see the resemblance of their faces."

Seeing that she's able to convince Souta, she makes a delighted pose.

"Nnn~ this place is....."

Behind the three, Dina, who was almost forgotten because of the impact of Roury, is awake.

Chapter 56

"Nnn~ this place is....."

Behind the three, Dina, who was almost forgotten because of the impact of Roury, is awake.

"Dina, are you alright?"

"Hmmm, Souta-san?"

Looking at Souta's face who runs to her, she's wondering "What happened?" while scratching her cheek.

"Souta-san !!"

Only after a small delay she remembers her condition and the importance of her seeing Souta again. Tears overflow from her widened eyes.

"Souta-san, everyone is! Brother is!!"

"I know, I know."

Souta embraces Dina strongly while she's weeping at his chest.

Her crying echoes in that floor that is already cleaned from monsters.

After a while, whether already calm or other reason, Dina stops crying.

"Dina?"

There is no answer to Souta's call.

"Dina, hey Dina."

Concerned, Souta peels her off his body to check, only to see she's sleeping with tears in the corner of her eyes.

"So you fell asleep..... It's because you cried like that right after waking up."

"How should I say this, she's amazing?"

Because she's pretty different from the image Narasu have in mind, she's apparently lost for words.

"Ummm, very cute maybe?"

Compared to Narasu, Roury who didn't have any kind of image of Dina, just says what first comes to mind.

"You never change huh, though it's great that you're healthy."

Souta who knows her from long ago only says those words.

"We can't stay here any longer.... let's go back, I'll carry Dina along."

Souta carries Dina in a popular princess carry style.

"That's right. We've accomplished our purpose here."

"Ah, I'm starving. I saved master from a pinch today, so treat me with a feast."

"Hahhh, seriously, you act like a kid. But, because it's the time Dina-sama awakened, we will have a celebration."

"This girl loved to play around noisily with everyone in the old days, I'm sure she'll be happy."

The three look at the sleeping face of Dina, they feel relieved and unconsciously smile while looking at her.



Narasu's Workshop

Because Dina is sleeping, they travel slowly, furthermore some monsters also attack them on the way, so when they arrive, the sun has almost set.

Hearing the workshop door open, Dina wakes up.

"Nnnn, hmm? Souta-san?"

As she rubs her eyes, her mind becomes clearer, and she gradually understands the situation.

"Aa, aaahhhhhhh What did I do! Suddenly weeping and then fell asleep like that....."

She shakes her head vigorously with her hands covering her face. Her covered face aside, her ears are completely red.

"Dina, can you stand by yourself?"

"Er, yes, I think it's okay."

Souta slowly puts down Dina on to her feet.

She was sealed for 1000 years, but because the time inside of the crystal also stopped, her body hasn't deteriorated at all.

While shaking the silver hair tied on her back, she turns around once to check her condition.

"Unn, yes I'm fine. Souta-san, thank you very much."

"Ah, don't mind. Instead of that, I want to hear about the thing you mentioned in the memory stone, can you explain?"

"Right, it seems like my physical condition is okay. I also want to ask something

from the two of you, it will be good if we can talk in a calm place."

"Dina-sama, I'm the court painter, Kurugo's, daughter. My name is Narasu, and I'm an alchemist. This is my workshop, if it's fine with you, we can talk inside."

Feeling the tension in her master's voice, Roury laughs.

"Pfft, ahahahaha, Master is nervous."

"Roury!!!"

Being made fun of her effort to show respect to Dina who she's able to meet after a long time, she's blushing as she chases Roury, who's running away.

"Fufufu, it seems like they're good people. Good people always seem to gather around Souta-san since long ago."

"Is that so? Anyway, let go in. This is a workshop, but there is a drawing room, we can talk there."

"Yes!"

With a smile on her face, Dina enters with Souta, and the other two catch up to them afterward.

They notice the smell of the soup when they enter the drawing room.

"Arezel, we're back, along with Dina."

Hearing that, Arezel comes out from the kitchen while still wearing an apron.

"Welcome back! S-So you're Dina-sama. I'm Arezel, Narasu's disciple, an apprentice alchemist, nice to meet you."

"Fufufu, such a cute alchemist aren't you. I'm Dinarius, nice to meet you too."

Dina smiles while stroking Arezel's head.

"Fu-fuaaa, cu-cute? me? To be praised by such a beautiful person like Dina-sama! I'm happy! ! ""

Arezel jumps around on the spot from the joy.

"Arezel, Arezel, I know you're happy, but calm down a little, also, we're going to have dinner after those two come back, is that fine?"

"Two people... So you meet Roury-sama right? I'm worried, she ran as soon as I told her about you two going to the cave."

She looks genuinely relieved hearing the news.

"Ahh, I made a meal because I thought everyone would come back soon. But it's just a regular meal and not a feast, I wonder if it will fit Dina-sama's palate

or not."

She puts her hand on her mouth, and a troubled expression can be seen on her face. Looking at Arezel's expression that keeps changing, Souta and Dina burst out laughing.

"You don't need to mind that, my mother is originally a maid, she is good at general home cooking, so I've more opportunity to eat things like that instead of a feast."

"Fueeee, ummm I'm sorry, because Dina-sama is a princess, I just assumed so." Thinking that she said something rude, she hurriedly bows her head.

"Arezel, we can continue the talk later, for now, can you bring out the food? I'll also pitch in some food so it'll be a bit luxurious."

"Ahh yes. I will prepare it right away."

Arezel turns around and then runs to the kitchen.

"Hahh-hahhh~ leaving us like that, Souta-dono is terrible."

"Hahh-hahhh~ Master, pull your punch the next time you hit me uuuu."

Just as Arezel enters the kitchen, Narasu and Roury barge into the room.

"Both of you, we'll have dinner soon. Take a seat, also..... wipe your sweat.

Souta takes cloths from his Dimensional Storage and passes them to Narasu and Roury, and then he sits next to Dina.

"Although there's a lot we need to talk about..... Well for now, let's eat first."

Chapter 57

For dinner, there's stew, bread, and salad prepared by Arezel, as well as steaks and noodle dishes using meat prepared by Souta, and cut fruits on the table.

"Awesome, it has become the most extravagant meal in the past few years..." Roury holds her finger in her mouth while drooling, and her eyes seem to be shining.

"Because Souta-san provided us with a variety of things, I was able to make such a feast."

Arezel also nods satisfyingly.

"Thank you Souta-san! This Roury-san is very happy!"

As Roury comes to Souta's side, she hits his shoulder repeatedly.

"Ahh yeah, as long as you're pleased."

The impression Souta gets from the simple-minded and cheerful Roury is quite different from his impressions of Carena and Elmia, considering they're blood-related, making him unable to hide his confusion.

"Roury, sit down, that's bad manners."

"Yes~."

She sticks her tongue out and then returns to her seat just like what she's told. The appearance that keeps her looks young is a racial characteristic of Elves, but because of her childish attitude, Souta is still wondering whether she's really Elmia's mother.

"Souta-dono, thank you for offering various things. Everyone focuses on research, so we don't have that many foods stocked....."

"Focusing on research huh....."

Souta's line of sight moves to Roury and Arezel in turn.

For Roury, there is the impression he got from the conversation so far, while Arezel doesn't seem to be suitable for research considering her reckless personality.

"I-I'm properly doing my research, you know?"

"Even me! Despite still being an apprentice..."

They hurriedly defend themselves and send their eyes to Narasu, expecting her follow-up.

"That's right... Both of you are indeed studying properly. However, Roury, she bought something unnecessary for her research and also delves into her hobby that clearly deviates from her research category."

"Uguhh!"

Stabbed at her sore spot, Roury drops her shoulders.

"Arezel keeps on trying while learning, but, she keeps rushing without care, because of that, she was almost kidnapped. If not for Souta-dono, she would have surely been kidnapped for real."

"Uuu~..... I'm sorry."

Arezel lowers her head and apologizes.

"Just like that, even though there are various negatives, they're indeed doing their best!"

Without realizing that the two of them has gone depressed, Narasu closes her speech with satisfaction.

"Fufufu, Narasu-san clearly thinks well about the two of you, isn't that so?"

"Are you deaf! Both of us were just finished off spectacularly, boo-hoo-hoo."

Roury unintentionally gives her retort to the smiling Dina.

"Yes, in words, what Roury-san said is indeed true, however, Narasu-san's face when she said that the two of you were doing your best looks was very happy."

When pointed out, Narasu's face turns red even until her ears.

""Master!""

The two raise their faces and then hug Narasu, whose face is red like a boiled octopus.

"Bo-Both of you, stop it!"

"It's fine isn't it?"

"That's right, please don't be shy."

Looking at the harmonious atmosphere created by the three, Dina has an expression full of happiness.

"Fufufu, being a good friend is great, don't you agree Souta-san?"

"Hm? Ahh yes, that's right. Anyway, should we start to eat soon? I'm starting to feel hungry....."

"Right, if we don't start soon, the food will become cold."

Dina claps her hands to gain everyone's attention.

"I think that getting along with each other is great and I'm glad that everyone is getting along, but since the special dish will cool down soon, shouldn't we start eating?"

Noticing Dina who is trying to change the flow of conversation, the three remember that this is the celebration of Dina's awakening, and so they separate from each other and return to their seats.

"M-My apologies, also for my disciples who made a ruckus."

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry."

Narasu, Arezel, and Roury lower their heads and apologize in order.

"I don't think there's a need to apologize that much. Anyway, leaving that aside, let's eat."

"That's right. Well then..... To celebrate my awakening, cheers!!"

""""Cheers~!!!""""

"Wait, why are you the one leading the cheers!?"

"This is delicious!"

"This meat is addicting-"

"What is this noodle dish? The unity of the soup and the noodles are wonderful!"

Souta's retort is swallowed by the hustle and bustle of the celebration, but it seems that the retort reaches Dina's ears, as she looks at Souta with a bright smile.



After the meal

"Now then, since we've satisfied our hunger, let's start the story, Dina."

"Sho full~"

"I can't anymore."

As Souta tries to advance the story, Arezel and Roury lying down because they ate too much.

"..... Let's leave those two aside for now, please start the talk, Dina-sama."

While massaging her facial muscles because of her two disciples, Narasu urges Dina to start.

"That's right..... Everyone, will you listen to me?"

"Ahhh another thing, can everyone keep everything you hear here a secret? Also because the topic might be difficult, it might be better to leave the room." When Souta looks at them one by one, Roury gets up.

"I will pass. I don't think I can keep up with the topic, don't worry because I'll keep everything I know here a secret."

Looking at Roury's back who leave the room, Arezel looks troubled, but she decides to follow her.

"I-I will also leave!"

She looks back in front of the door, bows and then leaves.

"And so they said. Is it fine that you remain here, Narasu?"

"Yeah, I have also lived longer than them, so I somewhat know about Souta-dono and Dina-sama..... Isn't it like a dream to be able to hear the truth about the legend from the actual person?"

Although she says that lightly, her expression is serious.

"Well then, can you tell us about Soldia and Dina's unique skill that you talked about in the Memory Stone?"

One of the heroes from a thousand years ago, an Elf who had fought alongside Souta, Soldia.

He and Dina were twin siblings, and they had a unique skill that they never told anyone.

"I understand, my brother and I....."

Chapter 58

"I understand. I will start with the explanation of the skill.... My brother and I both have the same unique skill. This is a skill that has no meaning if the two of us aren't aligned. This skill is called 'Pair Connect'."

"Is it a skill that shares information between you two?"

Predicting the information he got from the Memory Stone and the skill name, Souta conveys his conjecture.

Dina nods.

"That assumption is mostly correct. As for the range, the farther it is, the lower the accuracy is, though there is no problem if we used it inside the country."

"The effective range is quite wide, but as our activity was mostly outside of the Elven Country, it doesn't seem so useful."

Souta think that maybe she's aware about their journey, but that assumption seems to be off.

"It isn't, in fact, we only used it when we were still children, and only to the extent of when I was absent from the school so I could still learn without attending."

"Convenient, but..... Isn't that a bit weak for something like a unique skill, speaking of unique skill, all the ones I know of are so powerful."

Narasu's remark is roughly correct, there are many high spec people in this world, but people who have unique skill are stronger than them.

Souta's skill from the previous summon for example, 'Evil Severing Sword' is a skill specialized to be used against the Demon race.

Other than skills that demonstrate their power only against opponents of specific races, there are also special reinforcement skills and the like, but compared to them, 'Pair Connect' is clearly an inferior skill.

"I also thought so, that it's just a little convenient skill. However, that belief changed on the day Souta-san subjugated the Demon King."

The day Souta was repatriated, the day when all his companions were said to be dead.

"On that day, my older brother used Pair Connect at the last moment. I don't

know the exact point, but it seems like we can – under some conditions – send not only current progressive information, but also memories before and after activating the skill."

After taking a breath once, Dina closes her eyes while recalling the scene of that day.

"Receiving the connection from brother who was supposed to head toward the Demon King's Castle, I wondered if something had happened, and then I saw what my brother was seeing. Souta-san was not there at that time, and the princess of the Human race lost her expression and fell on her knees."

"Does that mean it was after I repatriated by the princess?"

Dina responds to Souta's question with a nod.

"I think that's probably the case. Looking at the human princess's face, that's clearly caused by magic power deficiency from using repatriation magic....."

For repatriation magic, in order to correctly connect the link of both worlds and send someone to a specific location, the required amount of magic power is also much greater than what's required for summon magic that is linked randomly.

"So it's true that after I killed Demon King, I was sent back with repatriation magic. Does that mean I really did kill everyone?"

Dina shakes her head to that question.

"By the time Pair Connect activated, Souta-san was already gone."

"Then, at that point the Elves' Hero-sama still alive, right?"

"Yes, my older brother was surprised that repatriation magic was invoked and looked toward the princess. Simultaneously the sight of the collapsed Hero of the Dragonkin race also entered my brother's view."

"Who the heck is the person?"

Mutters Souta in a small voice, it's unknown whether Dina hears it or not, as she just continues talking.

"Brother was also surprised at his collapse and tried to look around. The moment he looked backward, he was stabbed, I don't recognize who stabbed him, but that person was from human race. Perhaps my brother used Pair Connect at this moment... "

"Human? There should have been only me and princess at that place....."

"He looked a little older than Souta-san, his short hair was the same color as the princess, he had slightly chiseled face..... And, on his right ear, he wore an accessory imitating a wolf."

At the end of her words, Souta is confident about the identity of that person. Why? Because he remembers the doubt he had.

"That person is..... the man chosen as the hero of the human race."
Dina tilts her head.

"Isn't the hero of the human race Souta-san?"

"No, I might be a human in this world, but I was still the hero from another world, that's why there was another human who was chosen as a hero separate from me."

The two, especially Narasu, are surprised to hear this.
In the story, heroes were selected from each country. From the human country, it was Souta and the princess, nobody had any doubt about this.
It's not limited to Narasu, most people who read the story also think so.
"In the case where hero summoning failed, the king of human country had already made a plan to subjugate the Demon King by choosing heroes from each country. That man was the one who supposed to go."

"That person is brother's....."

"Probably... he's the princess' older brother, who was the first heir to the throne. That should be it considering what Dina's say about his features."

Dina shows a sorrowful expression as she now knows who is responsible for her brother's murder.

Not saying anything, Narasu only watches Dina with a sad expression.

"Considering the lifespan, that person shouldn't be alive anymore.... Why? Why he did that? Hey Dina, is there anything else you notice about that person?"

Dina puts her index finger on her mouth and tries to see if there is anything else.

"..... I'm sorry Souta-san, my brother fainted after he was stabbed. I was only able to see his face for a moment. However I feel like I saw someone else... I'm sorry, it might be just my imagination."

"So there is the hero from human race and someone else? Is that person probably the one who spread the story of Souta-dono and the other heroes?"

"That's possible. The people there were either dead or repatriated, if nobody alive was present, then there is no way the story would have spread, well, it seems like there is some information that person wanted to hide so the story was sprinkled with lies. "

The three of them sink into silence and are engrossed in thought for a while.

As silence pervades the room, they can hear sounds from outside.

"Wa-wait a moment, you can't enter the room now!"

The three who notice the voice outside the door send their gazes there.

Chapter 59

As silence pervades the room, they can hear sounds from outside.

"Wa-wait a moment, you can't enter the room now!"

The three who notice the voice outside the door send their gazes there.

There's not only Arezel's restraining voice, but also the sound of footsteps coming closer to the room.

The door opens loudly, from there, several armed elves enter the room.

"M-Master, I'm sorry. I tried to stop them, but....."

From behind them, Arezel said so in an apologetic voice, but her appearance is blocked by the armed elves.

"With whose order did you come barging in here! This is the workshop of the alchemist, Narasu!"

While trying to shake off the restraint on Arezel, Narasu roars from her anger at those who stepped in without permission.

"Excuse us from our sudden visit. We come here at the instruction of the king... I heard that the seal of the Demon Crystal in the western cave was broken."

The leader like man moves his focus from Narasu to Dina.

Being looked at, Dina looks away with uninterested expression.

"That person there must be Dina-sama who was sealed."

The man goes to Dina's side and grabs her arm roughly.

"I'm terribly sorry, but we wish for you to accompany us."

"I refuse, I'm a person of the past. I have no intention to be involved with the royal family now!"

Dina tries to swing her hand, but not only can she not escape, the man grasps Dina's hand stronger.

"Ow!"

That voice isn't from Dina, it comes from the man instead.

"Oi, stop it, not only did you guys barging in suddenly, now you're hurting Dina. Quite the nerve you have there."

Souta twists the hand he grabbed.

"Aw ouch ouch ouch ouch, stop! Don't be a hindrance, lowly human!"

He keeps his posture, but instead of an apology, what comes out from the man's mouth are words of contempt.

"In this situation, I would choose my words if I were you."

Souta twists the man's hand stronger while showing an amazed expression.

"Ouch! O-oi! You guys, do something!"

The other elves are taken aback by the sight of their leader who was caught in an instant, and it's only after they're given orders that they start to try to free their leader from Souta.

Souta pushes the leader toward his men who start to take action.

The leader's balance collapsed, but he's supported by his men just in time and doesn't fall.

"You bastard! What are you..."

"It's you guys! Isn't it you guys' fault for trying to overpower with force?"

Suddenly barging in with little explanation, how will someone accompany you if you don't explain anything."

With the intention to not let the man say anything anymore, Souta starts talking before the man finishes his words.

When the men entered the room, they had the initiative, but now it's Souta who grasps the flow in the place.

"So, how did you know that Dina's seal was broken?"

Wincing, the leader answers Souta's question.

"Tha-That is... the seal itself was managed by the country. There is a mechanism that notifies the administration office in the castle if something happens to the seal."

"..... The pedestal that supported the Demon Crystal huh... I don't know whether it's by magic or by weight, but it should be a magic tool that responds when the object is detached from the pedestal."

Listening to Souta, they realize they made a blunder with their mouths agape.

"And then, you asked the guard at the cave checkpoint who was the last person to go to the cave...."

"Why did you try to take me?"

Dina asks the most important question.

"That is....."

"Perhaps they don't know why either. They were just told to bring Dina by the higher-ups, without getting an explanation about the reason, or something like that."

"Uuu, I have no words to return if you guess that much..."

Souta sighed.

"When talking about elves, they usually have an intelligent image. The guard at the checkpoint, and now you guys, I might need to review the elves' image from scratch....."

Souta murmurs such a line while comparing the difference between the elves he met a thousand years ago and now.

"So what are you going to do? You seem like unable to give a reason that can convince us."

Listening to Souta, The men are at a loss for words.

"If you say that you're going to take her forcibly, I will be your opponent."

The man's subordinates feel hostility from Souta's remark and start to reach for their swords, however, the leader restrains them with a hand gesture.

"Stop it, we can't win against this guy. I tried to resist when I was caught, but I couldn't move my hand at all."

The leader understands the difference in ability from being caught instantly without able to do anything.

"I apologize for causing trouble, I will return some other time."

The man lowers his head to Souta, but he looks at the man with a displeased expression.

"Is it something to apologize to me?"

In rush from Souta's remark, the leader lower his head to Dina.

"Dina-sama, I'm terribly sorry for my rough behavior, I also apologize to Narasudono and that personage there for the trouble I caused."

Following the leader, the man's subordinates also lower their heads.

"Well then, excuse us."

The men leave the room quickly so they won't be stopped by Souta.

With the men leave, they can finally see the appearance of Arezel.

"Phew, it's good, I was scared that Dina-sama would be taken away because I fail to stop them..... Uh,uuu~."

Losing her strength, Arezel falls to her knees with teary eyes.

"Arezel, thank you. I know that you tried your best to stop them."

Dina caresses Arezel's head.

"Ah, auh~"

Arezel's face turns red and she narrows her eyes from the feeling of Dina's hand.

"Now then, what's the matter?"

"It's a problem."

Separated from the other two who have a pleasant and fuzzy atmosphere, Souta and Narasu show troubled faces.

"I knew that the country would move someday, but this soon ..."

"Just ignore them as long as they don't have a proper reason."

Narasu nods, but she still doesn't look convinced.

"However, I don't intend to stay long in this country, and I will take Dina with me. Of course that's as long as the person herself is alright with it."

"Of course I will follow Souta-san, I don't have any other relatives anyway, and in the first place, that was my intention when I thought about making the seal only able to be broken by Souta-san."

"Ahh, now the question is, why is the royalty of this country seeking Dina. It's good if they want to drive her away, but..."

"In any case, I think crossing the border now will be difficult, so stay for a while. We have beds available, so we will prepare the bedding."

Souta and Dina decide to accept Narasu's proposal.

"Sorry."

"Thank you."

Each of them are guided to the vacant room.

There is a bed and a desk in the room, and they're given a room each.

Chapter 60

Early in the next morning, Souta does his daily practice swings outside of the workshop.

An animal and a person, Ed and Dina, are watching from a place a bit away.

They're just simple practice swings, it's just that, but Dina who shows a happy expression keeps watching without getting bored.

Ed closes his eyes as Dina strokes his head, letting her keep petting him.

After continuing the practice swings for a while, Souta who feels the training is adequate, decides to take a break and approaches Dina and Ed.

"Good morning Souta-san, thanks for your hard work."

Dina stands up and hands the towel to Souta.

"Morning, also thank you..... By the way, since when did you start watching my training?"

While talking to Dina, Souta strokes Ed's head to greets him.

"Umm, I think it was around when you changed your wooden sword with Izayoi."

"About halfway then, that was pretty long, or rather, I don't realize you were watching at all. I guess it's expected of that guy's little sister."

"Ufufufu, I've always been good at erasing my presence since a long time ago. I often played hide-and-seek when I was little you see, but it was always the case where nobody can found me until the end."

Dina makes a peace sign with a prideful expression.

"To be proficient at the art of stealth at such an early age... That's amazing."

"What are you talking about, it's just like blending with nature. For example, if it's here then it's blending with the wind, or trees if it's in the forest."

Souta closes his eyes. Using Dina's explanation as a hint, he strongly pictures himself blending together with the wind.

'You learned Conceal skill'

He already expected it, but he still sighs because he learned the skill too easily.

"What's wrong? Did it not work? I can feel Souta-san's presence fade though....."

"No, how should I say it... I seem to get skills too easily, I already have Conceal as a skill."

"Hoe~ , it's amazing, but why are you sighing? Isn't it more convenient if you can learn the skill faster?"

Dina frankly shows her excitement, while also straightly asking about the problem.

"Originally, a skill is acquired after long training. And yet, to get it this easily, while I don't feel guilty, it still doesn't feel right."

Listening to Souta, Dina thinks for a bit.

"I can somewhat understand the feeling. But I believe that Souta-san is good at picking up things in the first place. Even if it is influenced by skill or God's blessing, you can still call this talent."

"Talent, is it?"

"Yes, just like how I learnt the Conceal skill just by playing around instead of properly training it. There would be people who train as hard as they can and still be unable to learn the skill, in the end it's simply because I have the talent." The feeling Souta has is the feeling of humility particular to Japanese, it makes him feel it's inexcusable to learn the skill without spending any effort. While it might not entirely be because of Dina's remark, he can now somewhat deal with the feeling.

"That's... right, it certainly can be seen that way.... While I'm not entirely convinced, what you said does ease my mind somewhat, thanks."

"No, not at all, I just said what I thought. But, if it can help Souta-san then it's great."

Dina says that with a fascinating smile.

"A-A~a. By the way, it's about time for breakfast, should we return now?"

"Yes!"

Dina follows Souta while looking happy.

When they return to the workshop, Narasu is still in the middle of preparing the breakfast.

Arezel, waiting for the breakfast, sits while swinging her legs.

"Souta-san, Dina-sama, good morning. Breakfast should be ready soon, so please have a seat over there."

After returning their greeting to Arezel, they sit down on the seats she'd pointed to.

"So Narasu also cooks huh."

"Yeah, I'm in charge of dinner, while Master is in charge of breakfast."

"Then, Roury-san is in charge of lunch?"

Listening to Dina's question, Arezel's face cramped.

"No, u-ummm, Roury-sama is....."

While Arezel is at loss for words, Narasu comes carrying the finished dish and gives Arezel timely help.

"That one's cooking is absolutely not good, catastrophic even. It's simply a bad idea for her to cook. A long time ago, Arezel who ate the cookies she made on a whim, end up stayed in the bed for three days and three nights..."

"Tha-That's quite a deal..."

Arezel's face pales when she remembers that event.

"Geez, no matter what, I absolutely will never eat what Roury-sama makes..."

Thanks for them talking about Roury, Souta remembers there is a letter for her from Elmia.

"Come to think of it, I still haven't given that letter to Roury..."

"Is it a letter from Elmia?"

"Yeah, so you know?"

Narasu nods deeply.

"The free-spirited Roury at the time went to the human territory with Carena, however she suddenly came back, while leaving Elmia in Carena's care. Isn't it obvious that she must want to try contacting her mother?"

"That's too free-spirited. Well, that's fine, so where is Roury?"

As he knows Roury is not in this room, Souta asks the two about her whereabouts.

"Umm, I don't know, Roury-sama comes and goes as she pleases..."

"I apologize for my foolish disciple."

"You don't need to apologize, I was just told to pass on the letter if I meet her."

It's fine as long as I remember to give the letter the next time I meet her."

Narasu tries to lower her head only to be stopped by Souta.

"That's right, Master. Roury-sama wandering around is just like it usually is, there is no end to it if Master minds it."

"Let's start eating then, it took quite some effort to make this, it would be a shame if the food cooled down. My stomach has been stimulated by the good smell from some time ago."

Dina changes the topic to the breakfast.

"I'm sorry, I will prepare it now then."

Narasu goes back to the kitchen to pick up the remaining dishes.

Arezel also follows her along to help arrange the table.

Then the door swings open.

"Ta~da~, Roury-san is home. Um, smells great. As expected of Master, let's eat it soon! I'm already starving."

Souta and Dina are taken aback by Roury who enters the room with great momentum, sits down on an empty seat, and starts demanding food.

"Oh, Souta-san, Dina-sama, good morning. The meal Master makes is delicious, so look forward to it!"

"I-I see."

Because of the flow of the conversation, Souta's reply is a bit delayed, but then he remembers about the letter.

"Right, the letter. Roury, here is a letter from Elmia, I'll pass it to you now before I forget about it."

After checking the front and the back of the letter, Roury puts the letter into her pocket without opening it.

"You aren't going to read it?"

"Yeah, I'll read it later. It was sent straight to me, so I feel that I need to read this alone."

Roury's reply is a bit toned down somewhat compared to when she had entered the room.

"Yesss~, thank you for waiting. Here's the breakfast."

"Yes, also the soup."

Narasu and Arezel put the dishes on the trays that are already arranged for

each person.

After the distribution is done and everyone is seated...

""Itadakimasu ""

The three, Narasu, Arezel, and Roury, start eating the food as is, only Souta and Dina give a pre-meal greeting unique to Japan.

"What is that? That itadakimasu?"

Arezel asks the question on behalf of others who clearly have similar questions.

"It's a greeting for before the meal which is common in my hometown. I taught Dina a long time ago..... I'm surprised that you still remember."

"Eeee~, it was Souta-san who told me to do it before you start your journey, you said "Always say itadakimasu before the meal, okay?"."

"Hmmm that's interesting. Master, let us also say it."

"Right, then Arezel too."

"Yes"

""""Itadakimasu""""

And the meal goes on peacefully. By the time they finish breakfast, Souta decides to explain about 'Gochisousama' this time.

t/n: we got an actual note this time

God's blessing mentioned in this chapter using same kanji with divine protection in stats 'window', the reason i translate it otherwise here is because it's more accurate, i don't plan to change the translation in stats window, hence why there is this note

A-A~a is a stutter of a~a, it's different from aah which means yes, the meaning is closer to is that so, or i see, but with a hint of confusion in this case

lastly, i did plan to translate itadakimasu and gochisousama, and i probably already did so, but looking at this chapter, it looks like i can't

Chapter 61

After breakfast, and after the explanation about "Gochisousama" by Souta is over, with the exception of Roury who is in charge of washing dishes, they start a discussion about their plans.

With the exception of when she's outside, Roury is in charge of cleaning up after meals because she can't cook.

"So, what kind of movement do you think the royal family will make in the future?"

"Let's see..... I'm not too familiar with the current king. However, if the rumors surrounding the royal family are true, then it shouldn't be bad."

Hearing that, Souta looks puzzled.

"Current king? Does that mean that the throne changed hands?"

Diana strikes her palm with a fist.

"Souta-san doesn't know about the way Elf king changed right?"

"Normally speaking, once the king reaches the end of their lifespan, the king would abdicate and entrust the country to the next generation, right?"

"That's right, but that's only one of the reasons. There is another rule that's been decided since the foundation of the Elven Country."

It seems like common knowledge for elves, Arezel and Narasu also nod, agreeing with Dina.

"The other rule is that the duration of the reign was decided to be up to two hundred years. Elves are long-lived, but based on the first generation king, a country that is ruled only by one king will have its future narrowed."

"I see, so that means it wasn't long since the current king crowned?"

After thinking for a bit, Narasu answers Souta's question.

"If I remember correctly, the current king was crowned this year, it's been changed every two hundred years since the time Souta-dono was summoned a thousand years ago."

"So that king also finished his two-hundred-year term..."

The king who gave judgment to seal Dina also replaced two hundred years later.

Thanks to the seal, Dina got a chance to meet Souta again, even so, knowing the dishonesty that happened until the decision to seal her passed makes Dina feel something indescribable.

Souta pats Dina's head.

"Not everyone from the human race is bad, even though I was also involved.....
Guess they will arrive soon?"

Souta who senses something turn his eyes to the door, the others also look toward the door in the same way.

Knock-knock.

"Umm, this is the person that visit yesterday, is it alright for me to enter?"
Along with the knocking sound, they hear a voice.

Dina, Narasu, and Arezel, move their gazes to Souta, silently asking what they should do.

"Oioi, don't look at me. This is Narasu's workshop, I leave the decision to you."
This time, their eyes gather at Narasu.

"Ehh~, for now, it's fine to let them in, I guess. It doesn't look like they have the same attitude as yesterday. Please come in."

Unlike yesterday, the person comes in with prudence, and then closes the door slowly.

"Excuse me. Thank you for allowing me to enter even though I did something rude yesterday."

The leader from yesterday is different in many ways compared to yesterday, just like how he lowered his head many times while on his knees when he enters the room.

"You don't need to worry about that. I'm not really angry about yesterday."
Isn't that right? Asks Narasu while looking at Souta.

Souta lightly nods.

"So, what kind of orders did you get today?"

"First of all, it's an apology for yesterday's rudeness. I'm terribly sorry."
The man bows his head with momentum so great that it wouldn't be a surprise if his head fell off.

"I don't really mind, so I accept your apology, what about your main purpose?"

The man raises his head, and says the matter that's difficult to talk about.

"I understand, I'd like to report about yesterday's event, about the conversation that happened, and for this I ask Dina-sama and also that personage to come as well."

"Are you taking me along because I raised my hand against a knight?"

The man swings his head and hands, denying Souta's remark. Large beads of sweat can be seen on his forehead.

"Tha-That's out of question. If I do that, no matter how many lives I have, it won't be enough to atone. The king seems to like you a lot, and wants to see you by all means..... Originally, the king wanted to come here himself, but the prime minister managed to stop him. As a compromise, it was decided that the two of you should come to the royal castle instead."

Everyone who remembers how Souta acted yesterday wonders how can he be liked with his actions.

"The impression is quite different from what I thought. I never imagined the elves who serve the country would be like this considering every elf I met since I came here."

"So, what will you do?"

Dina smiles and asks Souta, her expression implies, "The answer is already decided, isn't it?"

"There is no choice, we'll go. However, since I don't have any information about the country at the moment, I want Narasu to accompany us, is that fine?"

Souta asks both the man and Narasu.

"I don't mind coming along, but ..."

"O-Of course, it's not a problem if Narasu-sama comes along. Her identity is guaranteed being a famous alchemist, and the king said it's fine if the number of people increases. Please do come by all means."

Afraid of them changing their minds, the man strongly approves of Narasu coming with them.

"I-I understand, I will accompany them."

"It will do as long as you come... Other than that... That's right, I don't think I'll change my attitude even with the king, is that okay?"

The man is at a loss for words for a moment, but then remembers that bringing

them over is the top priority.

"I-I believe it's fine. Since the king is lenient about that, though I don't know about the ministers..."

The man says the second half of the sentence in a small voice that's almost inaudible.

"If there's a problem, I can just go back. Should we go right away?"

"N-No, as long as it's within reason, you can come anytime within a few days. It will be great if you can tell me now when you will come, though."

The man talks while remembering the condition presented before his departure.

"If you two are fine with it, I think I want to go now ... but how is it? "

"I don't mind, I will follow Souta-san."

Answers Dina with a smile.

"That's... right. Nothing good will come from postponing it anyway, so let's go."

Answers Narasu while thinking about something.

"There you have our decision, so is it fine to go now?"

"Y-Yes, it's fine. We have prepared a carriage outside, so please get on."

Having considered the possibility they would come right away, the man who prepared the carriage in advance feels relieved.

Chapter 62

"So narrow....."

The man guiding us is called Dorusu. The carriage he prepared is the one that commonly used by nobles, if it's used for its intended purpose, then there should be enough space.

"It really is, isn't it..."

Dorusu also agrees with Souta.

Boarding the should-be-for-four-people carriage are six people: Dina, Souta, Narasu, Arezel, Roury, and Dorusu.

"I'm sorry, I was planning to ride with you too, but... I should've ridden a horse separately."

"It's fine, I never thought everyone would come along like this."

"I-I'm sorry, I actually didn't have the intention of coming along, but...."

Everyone's eyes gather at Roury.

"Hm? Isn't it fine? It looks like it's going to be interesting, there is no way I'll miss out on it!"

Roury who had finished washing the dishes overheard the conversation with Dorusu, and took an interest in the new king.

And so, she urged Arezel who was reluctant and afraid to come to the king's castle.

The result is their current cramped state.

Souta originally proposed to bring his own carriage, but after thinking for a bit, the idea was rejected by Dorusu.

It was said there would be a problem if a carriage with low status were to enter the royal castle.

"I'll just endure this until we reach the castle... Say, do you know the flow of events that will happen once we arrive?"

"Hmmm let's see, once we reach the royal castle, I need to contact the king and minister right away, I think you will be asked to wait in a different room until we're ready."

"It will be boring if we don't do anything while waiting, so please prepare sweets and tea."

Responding to Dorusu's answer, Roury orders so.

"I-I understand, are there other requests from everyone else?"

Despite Dorusu's answer, Narasu hits Roury's head.

"What are you doing!"

"That question should be asked to you instead, learn how to hold back even if it's just a bit."

"Eeee~ but isn't it fine? Even Dorusu say it's fine."

With Narasu and Roury's exchange as the background, Souta answers Dorusu's question.

"Nothing in particular, but don't put a guard outside of our waiting room, and don't eavesdrop on the conversations we have inside."

"Tha-That is....."

"It doesn't really matter, but in that case, I will treat them as my enemies."

Souta says so with an intimidating attitude.

"I-I will convey that to the top."

Dorusu treats the request seriously because Souta's eyes are clearly not laughing.

Dina who sits next to Souta doesn't rebuke him and instead just watches him with a smile.

In fact, her reaction is like that because she knows Souta won't do anything terrible to them even if he ends up regarding them as enemies.

Arezel becomes more and more tense as they get closer to the castle. Souta already visited the royal castle when he was summoned before, and this time around he was also summoned into the royal castle of the human race. Dina was originally royalty, while Narasu and Roury have experience getting summoned to the royal castle as alchemists. Arezel is the only one experiencing this for the first time.

"Arezel-san, are you okay?"

Dina asks that to Arezel who shows a poor complexion while grasping her hand.

"Di-Dina-samaaa. It's my first time going to the royal castle, we will meet the king too, but despite that, my clothes are like this....."

Because her master and senior disciple are still arguing, Arezel can't rely on them, and so Dina who understands and tries to start a conversation with her looks like a goddess for her.

"You can be relieved, everyone is here, the other party is not looking for formality either. As for clothes, if there are problems with clothing, surely they will prepare it for us, isn't that right?"

Still grasping Arezel's hand, Dina sends a smile toward Dorusu. Arezel also looks at Dorusu with an entreating gaze, cutting off his escape path.

"I-It should be fine..... Maybe..."

"Maybe?"

And Souta deals the finishing blow.

"N-No, we will definitely prepare them!"

With that as the clincher, Dorusu can only answer with affirmation.

"Hmm?"

The carriage stopped, looking from the small window on the door, it seems like they have already reached the castle.

The coachman is having an argument in front of the gate, and then for the sake of confirmation, they come around to Souta and others.

Before they knock on the door, Dorusu opens it to speak with them.

"Dorusu-dono, are they the people in question? Also, why is the number of people....."

"These are the people that our king wishes to see, the others are just chaperons. As for the number of people..... I think it should be fine, as it was never specified in the first place."

The guards are looking at Souta and the others rudely, making Dorusu panic.

"I-Isn't it fine already? We already took their spare time, so just let us in."

"Ah yes, I'm sorry. You can come in, I've told the coachman, you will be brought to the front door, so please come down there and enter the castle."

Looking at Dorusu's desperate look, the guard remembers his duty and returns to open the gate.

After getting into the carriage, Dorusu signals the coachman to start moving again.

"So-Sorry, it seems like the full explanation is still not conveyed to the people

below."

"You don't need to worry, as long as it doesn't become a problem."

Says Souta to Dorusu who looks like he's sweating.

A while after they pass the gate, the carriage stops again.

Then the door was opened from the outside and a man in butler clothing bowed.

Dorusu who is closest to the door gets down first, with the others following him right after.

"Souta-sama, Dina-sama, and everyone else, I bid you welcome. From here on, I will be the guide. Dorusu-sama, thank you for all that you have done so far, you can go back to your original duty now."

"I understand. Then, I will *sincerely* count on you."

Dorusu puts various thoughts into that answer.

"Well then, this is how far I go, Please excuse me."

"Ahh, thank you."

"Thank you very much."

Once they finish saying their thanks, Dorusu leaves the place. After they can't see his figure anymore, Dorusu starts running.

"Crap, they will surely place some lookouts. I need to hurry!!"

Short Story 01

Souta and Daiki

He was a hard worker.

He had good motoric skills and practiced various sport since childhood. From them, the one that he liked the most is kendo.

When asked "Why?" his answer is...

"Ummm-just because? Don't you think it suits my gender?"

In elementary school, he went to the kendo dojo on a daily basis, spending great effort and accumulate conspicuous achievement. Even at the dojo, kids

from the same grade or one year higher than him was no enemies for him.

This person would taste a big setback at the middle school tournament.
"The winner is Konoe Souta from North Junior High School!"
Daiki heard that announcement while holding the medal for the third place. He was defeated by Souta at semifinal.

The thing that frustrated him the most was Souta's face showing an expression as if to say it was natural to win. Although Souta didn't actually think that, but that was what reflected from Daiki's eyes.

"One day, I will defeat him!"
Daiki strongly vowed in his heart. After he retired from the club in middle school, he went back to the dojo he attended when in elementary school to keep practicing. I will go to the national in high school and then I will defeat him! That's what he thought at the time.

"No way..... Why the same school....."
Daiki -who thought that Souta would go to the school that had a strong kendo club-was surprised when he saw Souta at the entrance ceremony.

Why? Why did you go to such a normal high school? Unable to put aside that question, Daiki asked that to Souta directly when he bumped on to him.
"Wh-Why are you in this school! There should be a stronger school out there!"
"Hm? I don't know whether this school is strong or weak, but I choose this school because it's close to my home. Isn't it enough reason for choosing school?"

Souta who suddenly questioned also answer seriously, that answer seriously dampen Daiki's motivation. However, once he thought that they could work and practice together, he regained his motivation.

However, Souta didn't enter the Kendo club.

Of course, when he learned about it, Daiki immediately questioned Souta.
"Why you don't join the Kendo Club!"
"Hm? I just thought I had enough of kendo, I already won the tournament anyway."

Actually, the reason was because it became unsatisfactory for him who already felt the tension of the real battle.

"Wha-?"

Daiki became speechless. Souta who thought his answer was enough, walk away from the place.

Daiki would then leave his mark at the high school prefectural tournament. But he was only able to get second place, and so the feeling of inferiority toward Souta was still lingering in his heart.

Short Story 02

Souta and Haruna

On the way home from school, Haruna was waiting for the train on the platform bench.

"Fu~fu~fu~fun, return home by train ~ ♪"

She was humming her own song. Daiki and Aki had club activities, and Touko went to a far away bookstore, it was rare that she went home by herself.

Then, one male student sat on the bench next to hers.

"Hnn?"

She was singing because she was alone, so she stopped and then sent her gaze to check who was the person who sat there.

"Ehh? Konoe-kun?"

It was a familiar person. He was 'Konoe Souta' from the same class as her. She rarely talked with him, even then it was only to the extent of exchanging greeting. But the boy still left his impression on her.

"Ahh~, Kasai ... was it?"

However, Souta seemed to have only a faint memory of her.

"Geez, remember correctly! Aren't I your classmate!"

She puffed her cheeks and then moves to where Souta sat.

"My bad, you're the one that often around Minamiyama right..... In a group of four people."

Souta apologized to her and said the information he remembered.

"Un, with Dai-kun, Aki-chan, and Touko-chan, we four are best friends!"

She made a peace sign while stuck out her big breast.

"Is that so....."

Nevertheless, Souta's reaction was bland. Since he came back to this world three years ago, he seemed to avoid making connections with people from this world. As if, he felt that this was not his place.

"Geez, react more won't you?"

"Sorry."

Even so, Haruna was a little troubled with Souta's light reaction.

"No~pe, You should smile more, don't Konoe-kun think you can get more friends that way?"

As Souta had a light presence even in the class, she gave that advice. Souta also felt that way, but even when he thought that, he still didn't care.

"Come one, smile! smile! Or not..... It won't be good if it's forced. How about funny story..... I know! Sometimes ago, Touko-chan suddenly moved the chair that Dai-kun tried to sit on, he tried to stay as he was, but he was already on the posture trying to sit down."

"Fumu, and so because of that he fell down?"

She shook her head to answer Souta.

"U~un, I thought he was going to fall, but in a hurry I placed supporting rod that was near to help him. That rod ended up stabbed in his rear. When I see Dai-kun's face at the time...."

"Hahahahah, it must be tough. I never thought something like that happens to that smart faced person."

She spoke with exaggerated gestures, Souta who was loosen although just for a moment, showed his smile. Haruna was then continued to talk to him until the train came with a satisfied smile.

Short Story 03

Souta and Aki

One day three years ago, Aki was participating in the kendo tournament as a junior high school third grader.

She was in the girls' division, but she lost on quarterfinal, this made her feel frustrated.

"Hahh~, I could only show subtle performance this time."

Heartbroken, she separated from her teammate and hang around the venue alone. Then the announcement about the start of final of the men's section began to flow to the venue. She went to the men's section for no reason to watch it.

Once there, she opened her eyes wide from the surprise.

"..... !?"

It was a boy from different middle school with the same age as her.

Aki could felt the atmosphere changed when she entered the hall. It was also the same for others, and the venue that was supposed to be in high tension because of the final was quiet.

"That person, amazing."

Everyone other than the contestants, all showed a different reaction. They were unable to express it well, but they know there was something different.

He showed overwhelming strength when the final start, and would win the tournament very easily. The opponent was completely overwhelmed by his atmosphere, and even if not, no contestant could fight him head-on.

After she enrolled in high school for a while. She met three people: 'Daiki', 'Haruna', and 'Touko' who will become her friends later. However, the most shocking thing for her was that the person who won that tournament was going to the same high school as her.

The kendo in this school was not weak, but still, she thought that with the ability he had, he would go to famous private school instead. Aki looked at him and tremble in excitement. It was because she imagined she could train kendo

with such a strong person for the next three years.

However, that thought didn't come true.

He didn't enter the kendo club. Why! What is your reason! Don't you think that it is a waste even though you have that much ability! She had such a strong feeling, and in fact, she actually showed that emotion to the person in question.

His reply was unacceptable for Aki.

"Sorry, I've tasted the battle for my life, so I decided to end everything with that tournament as the last. Even if I still continue, I feel like I have nothing to gain from kendo."

After that, he would be summoned to other world together with Aki and the other three from her group.

By experiencing a life-threatening battle in that world, Aki would then understand the true meaning of what that person said, but that story is still the story from the future.

Short Story 04

Souta and Touko

Library after school.

Other than the sound of students who did club activity outside, there was no other sound other than the sound of flipped pages.

She, 'Kitagawa Touko', came to the library all the time when she had some free times. The library of this school was vast, it was about the size of a small municipal library, so the amount of book collection was more than other schools.

Flip, flip, such is the sound of the flipped page.

"Ah....."

The reason she made such voice was because she saw the student that

frequently came to the library like her.

"You're here too huh."

That remark comes from her classmate, 'Konoe Souta'.

Although they didn't have a special feeling for each other, he was still a classmate that frequent the library, so they still had a basic amount of conversation like a small greeting.

"Yep, Konoe-kun too right."

She returned the words to him with a small voice without any intonation.

"Ahh, that's right."

Only this, the words exchanged were only one or two at the time, but being a classmate with the same hobby, the exchange felt pleasant.

Always two people, reading the book they like in a separated seat.

For example, Touko liked reading books about romance and great men. She also read various books such as quotation collection like 〇〇 wordbook.

For example, Souta frequently read exciting stories such as adventure stories and detective stories.

Although no genre they liked match with each other, one day, Touko made a plan. Let's read the book Souta read.

It was just a whim, she always thought that it was not bad to read a book with the genre she never read before, She thought it was better to read from the book her classmate interested in for a start.

Let's hit one series and start reading from there. She was originally omnivorous reader who read any genre of books, so she could enter the story with ease and read the series all at once.

The books she was reading today was also a book she saw Souta borrowed before, and that book also interesting just like other books he read.

Someday I want to talk with him about the contents of the book. While holding such a feeling, she -who almost never had the opportunity to communicate with boys other than Daiki who was frequently with her-could not start a conversation with him. That's why.....

"Ohh, you also read that? I read it too, and it's interesting, I recommend the

sequel from that author so please read it if you haven't read it yet."

Touko secretly smiles when she listened to Souta's remark.

Chapter 63

They're guided to a room that clearly spells waiting room. There are chairs and sofas inside, and the fruits and sweets that Roury wants are also arranged on the central table.

When Roury enters the room, she joyfully goes to the table right away. The others also sit down, only Souta makes himself at home and wanders around.

Souta looks for people's presence around the room, but he finds no sign of people on the other side of the wall, behind the ceiling, and in front of the entrance.

"Dorusu's efforts seem to be bearing fruit, I can't feel the sign of lookout."

"Right, I feel a bit sorry though."

Dina thinks about Dorusu's busyness after he separated with Souta's party.

In fact, Dorusu was running to the room Souta and others guided to via a different route, and then he hastily made everyone in the surroundings keep away from the room.

Ignoring the chain of command, he had done the feat of running around contacting every person concerned and convince them to keep away from the room in such a short time.

Although he has enough ability to know the difference of power between him and Souta, and his quick wit and execution speed are highly regarded by others. The other party this time is bad, and since his position is stuck between the two, the evaluation Souta and the others can give is only from the middle management standpoint.

"Well, he's maybe in the wrong, but this is still in line of his job, so it can't be helped."

Souta says so while shrugging.

Even to Souta, his appropriate response and speedy switchover are evaluated highly in his book. But still, his friends are the top priority, so Souta is strict to him.

"Souta-dono is strict to people who are not his comrades isn't he."

"That's true, I guess. In the first place. I don't have blood relatives here. Because of that, I want to keep the comrades I want to protect within my reach."

Hearing Souta, Dina nods with a smile.

Despite his growth and changes in his tone and appearance, Dina is pleased that Souta's nature has still not changed.

"More importantly, we need to do something about that."

At the end of their gaze, there is Arezel who is unable to settle down.

Although she was calmed down after her conversation with Dina in the carriage, she became nervous again from the unfamiliar sight once they entered the castle.

And as the reality about the audience with the king sinks in more and more, her tension reaches the peak.

"Arezel, come here, let's eat these sweets together."

Arezel turns her gaze to Roury who beckons her.

"N-No, I am fine, Roury-sama can eat it all."

Right after she answers her, Arezel starts to wander around the room again.

"A-re-zel. Listen to me and come here."

Roury goes and catches the roaming Arezel and then forcefully drags her to the table.

"Here, eat this, this and also this, they're delicious."

"Geez, Roury-sama is so pushy..... Delicious! What is this, this is seriously delicious!"

"Isn't it. Here, eat more."

Roury is irritated with Arezel who was wandering around, she is not consciously trying to relieve her tension, but her action still calms Arezel down.

"That's a natural airhead isn't it, it seems somewhat familiar....."

"Right, umm, when I see Roury-san, it reminds me of the beastmen's hero-san."

Souta holds Dina's shoulders and greatly nods.

"That's it! I thought that she somewhat resembles someone. That's right, so her atmosphere is similar to that fellow. Wild, pushy, and free, yeah, exactly that person. Haaa~ I feel somewhat refreshed."

"I-Is that so, it's good."

Reddish tinge appeared on Dina's cheeks who answers like so.

Looking at those two, Narasu feels pleasant.

When Roury and others enjoying the sweets, knocking sound can be heard from the door.

"..... You can come in."

As the representative of everyone who stops moving, Souta answers the knock.

"Pardon my intrusion. Our side is ready for the audience, I have come to guide you..... are your preparations complete?"

This time, it's not the butler-style man who guided them to the room who comes, but a female knight clad in armor.

Her gaze is sent to the fruits Roury and Arezel have in their hands.

When Arezel notices the gaze, she returns the fruit in a hurry.

While Roury throws the fruit into her mouth when she notices the gaze.

"Sigh, seriously, you guys are..... sorry for that."

As she sighs, Narasu lowers her head to the female knight and apologizes.

"No, it's fine really."

As the knight knows about Narasu, she stops her from lowering her head with her hands.

"Well, you heard what she says, so will you please guide us?"

".....You are Souta-san aren't you? I already heard the story from Dorusu-san, I sincerely wish you don't rub the nobles the wrong way."

She puts up her forefinger to bring Souta's attention.

"I don't know what you heard from Dorusu..... But as long as the other party doesn't start anything, I will also do nothing."

The female knight who already anticipated Souta's answer sighs, and then she moves again to guide the others.

"My order is just to guide you, I don't know what will happen afterward, so for now, let's go."

By chance she happened to work at the castle, by chance she knew Dorusu, and by chance she caught the minister's attention.

She received this guiding duty was because of those overlapping coincidences.

From the talk before, she had a feeling there would be trouble, or at least,

that's what she believes will happen, so she wants this duty to quickly finish.

After turning a few corners, they enter a wide passage with a large door that's incomparable to other doors they see on the way.

When Souta and others arrive by the door, the guard and the female knight talk about something.

"Well then, please proceed through the door once it opens. From there just go straight to the king..... Oh right, please stop about ten steps before the king. Since it seems the talk will advance inside, I will excuse myself."

After bowing to Souta and the others, she leaves the place hurriedly.

Dina thinks about asking a few question, but it doesn't happen as the guards already stand in front of the door.

"Well then, I will open it."

Ahead of the opened door is the red carpet that continues until below the king's throne, knights are arranged on both side.

In the vicinity of the king are his aides, and one of them is the minister who had been mentioned a few times so far.

Just like what the female knight said, they keep going straight and stop ten steps before the king.

The one that opens their mouth first is the minister, not the king.

Chapter 64

"Which one of you is called Souta?"

When the minister asks that question, Souta and the others are kneeling. "Yes, I'm the one called Souta, an adventurer. I am extremely happy for the opportunity to have an audience with the king and the nobility this time." Looking at Souta who is uncharacteristically humble, Narasu and the others are surprised.

"Fumu, that's quite an admirable attitude isn't it. You're permitted to raise your head."

Souta, with the permission from the minister, raises his head and looks toward the king.

"Your Highness, what will you do?"

The minister approaches the king to ask about treatment for Souta and the others, but the king starts to lose interest in Souta.

Propped on one elbow, he sends his attention to the day after tomorrow, acting like he doesn't care anymore.

"Hn, ahh, whatever is fine right? I called them because I wanted to hear the story just in case, but it's not particularly important anyway."

Usually he's a good king with good sense, his attitude right now is caused by the disappointment he gets when he heard Souta's answer, which was unexpectedly normal.

"Oh, Your Highness, in that case, what is the meaning of this summon! There's the thing about Dina-sama if I take you at your word."

After Dina's name mentioned by the minister, the king changes his sitting position and attitude.

"Dina-sama, daughter of that inept king huh? Is it fine to release the seal of Dina-dono now?"

Dina also raises her head to answer the king's question.

"It's fine. I guess it's going to be a thousand years now? The seal was safely released."

"About that, can you tell me the reason why the unsealing ceremony failed

before, as well as why it's solved now?"

She moves her hand to her chin, thinking, as she's not sure about the answer, and then after a while, she answers with a face covered in a bright smile.

"It's a secret!"

"A secret huh. Hahaha, it can't be helped then, Wahahaha~!"

Whether the king likes the answer, he lets out hearty laughter.

"No matter if Dina-sama was royalty in the past, how dare you conceal the truth from the current king!"

"That's right, that's extremely rude!"

The nobles in attendance raise their voices to criticize Dina. The person in question -while their words don't hurt her feelings-only shows a bitter smile as she's feeling troubled.

"No, wai-....."

Just when the king tries to stop them, a slander said in a remarkably loud voice resounds.

"This sinner is sure is impertinent."

"That's right, sinners can stay in prison!"

The moment that a shadow is cast on Dina's face from that slander, strong wind suddenly blows in the hall. No, it's not actually wind, the feeling comes from unleashed magic power.

"Ah?"

Souta's voice that's filled with anger reaches every person's ears in that hall.

Their attitude from some time ago vanishes as Souta glares at those men who called Dina a sinner.

Those men act just like a frog stared by a snake, they just stand there unable to move. No, the others who are in that hall are also unable to move.

"Hey, what did you say?"

Souta slowly approaches the man.

"Uu, no, I am ..."

Only one capable of speaking, even if only to that extent. The other man is overwhelmed by Souta to the point that he can't even open his mouth.

"Wa-Wait a moment, I apologize for the poor behavior of my subordinate, will

you lower your weapon?"

The king who regains his composure the earliest raises his voice to stop Souta. "It's no use even if you apologize, isn't it? After all, the ones who made the worst slander against my companion are them. Not to mention..... Aren't you apologizing to the wrong person here?"

Souta sends his gazes to Dina.

"Yo-You're right. Oi, you all, apologize to Dina-dono immediately! From me too, Dina-dono, I'm terribly sorry for the impoliteness of my subordinate." The fact their action has made the king lower his head makes them tremble from the fear of the person who approaches them from the side. Noticing that everyone's eyes are gathered on them, they quickly lower their heads with pale faces.

"We're terribly sorry. Dina-sama, please find it in your heart to forgive us!" Down on their knees, they then ask for forgiveness while lowering their heads to the floor, it's the so-called dogeza style apology.

"I-It's fine, I don't mind, please raise your heads." Said Dina with a slight impatience. After that, she goes to Souta's side and raises her index finger to gain his attention. "Souta-san too, it's not good to be angry like that. Since you have strong magic power, if your method is like that, that will just make Souta-san evil." "Mu, it was my bad. Well, since Dina already forgave them, I don't have any reason to get angry anymore." Souta reins in his magic power and anger and then apologizes to Dina.

Although she's showing a bitter smile when Souta obediently apologizes, her smile changes into normal smile not long after. "Geez, it can't be helped then... but, to get angry for my sake, I'm happy." The cheeks of Dina who said so start to turn red.

"Go-honn." As the king clears his throat, everyone's attention gathers there. "Ahh, was it Souta? If I understand it right, your admirable attitude before was to hide your true nature?" "Well, something like that. It's already found out so I'll speak..... it's because you seem to be interested in me who drove back Dorusu, I thought you'd lost

interest if I were a meek, submissive person."

Because of Souta's rude attitude, the nobles want to raise their complaints, but once they remember the exchange from before, they swallow the complaints at the tip of their tongues.

"Fuhh~, I really fooled by that. However, I only want to confirm the story with you without doing that. I don't want to trouble you all."

"Even if you intend to do so, if my attitude from the start were like this, the noble would complain, in the end we will end up caught in trouble. "

After thinking for a bit, the king nods,

"Certainly, you're right. You know these people well."

"So, what are you going to do with us? Are you just interested in the subject? Or are you want to treat Dina as a sinner just like what those people there said?"

The king quietly shakes his head.

"No, I will not do anything. If I try to do anything further, the damage will be greater for us. Even if it was just momentary, I could still see part of your ability through the exchange earlier."

Then he nods, satisfied.

"Then, can I go back soon?"

"Ahh, no, we can't just send you back without anything in return after we summoned you specifically. This is something that made you feel uncomfortable, and then the others who came along, to just leave without saying a single word. Well then, what to do.... "

The minister whispers something to the king, who is putting his hand on his chin and looks troubled.

"Fumu, I see. But, then..... Hm."

Chapter 65

"... That's fine I guess. For the time you spent coming here, and unsealing Dina-sama's seal which we, the Elves can't do, I want to give you a reward."

After nodding to the minister's suggestion, the king tells Souta so.
"The contents of the reward....."

"Wait a moment, I'll tell you this beforehand, I don't need something like an honorary title. It will just get in the way if I receive such a thing."
The minister who believes the suggestion he said to the king shouldn't be heard by anyone else, stares at Souta wide-eyed, surprised that the proposal was already anticipated and outright prevented.
By the way, the king turns stiff with his mouth still open.

"Now that's out of the way, what is the content of the reward?"
Souta who asks that after turning down the proposal even before it's uttered dumbfounds the king and the minister.
"..... I will return your question with a question, is there anything you want?"
"Nothing in particular comes to mind..... Oh right, I'll take Dina along. It's enough if no one ever objects to this."
Souta puts his hands on Dina's shoulders while telling his request.

"Fumu, this time it's our side that might have a problem, though I in particular don't mind..."
The king sends a subtle glance to the minister and the nobles, but everyone shows a complicated expression.
"What does everyone think?"
"Umu, I think it's fine, at any rate this is an unprecedented situation."
The minister gives a positive answer, though he can't say it strongly.

"But, she is originally royalty of this country, shouldn't she get involved in the government?"
"It's an awakening after hundreds of years, we should announce it extensively."
"What are you talking about, if you consider the reason she was sealed in the first place, we should banish her instead."

"No, that reason itself might be wrong, we should look for the actual reason first."

"Even if we discuss such a vague topic now, it won't change anything."

The nobles each voices their opinion, however their opinions are not coherent at all.

"Either way, I will still leave this country with Dina. Whether you don't allow it and I become a criminal, or you permit it and decide to give me a reward, either you build relationship with me or not. Even if in the end it doesn't become a friendly relationship, I at least won't be hostile."

The nobles who kept talking until now are silenced after hearing Souta's words.

"If you say that much, there is no other response other than agreement. With a suggestion like that, we can't complain either, as our side will be the one that will bear the disadvantage. As for Dina-dono, we don't have any reason to deal with her too."

Answered the king, the minister also nods, agreeing with him.

"Rather, it will be quite a merit if we can get a little friendlier with just that." The nobles are upset that the king said that while shrugging without hiding his real intentions. Souta, however, is smiling from the king's answer.

"You are quite interesting, you don't seem kingly at all. People must have a favourable impression of you."

Souta and the king exchange their gazes, and they both smile.

"Unless there is any complaint, This country will take no unneeded interference policies with regards to Dina-dono's actions in the future. I will also prohibit remarks or actions deemed to be hostile against her and her companion!"

From that declaration, the hall is noisy from people's whispers, but nobody raises their voice to object.

"If so, can we go?"

"Ahh, you can..... however before that, I want to give you a little souvenir, how about you wait in the room from before? It will be delivered there later."

After thinking for a while, the king said that with a hidden meaning in his expression.

"I don't have anything I want, but if you go this far, I'll take it. Of course if it's

something troublesome, I'll give it back."

"Ahh, I know. Then, let's end the audience. Someone, guide Souta and his companions to the waiting room."

Although it's still noisy, the king forcibly ends the audience. One of the knights nearby walks toward Souta and the others to take the duty to guide them to the room.

On the way back, neither the knight nor the other members say anything, they go to the room in silence.

"Well then, I will excuse myself."

"Ahh, thank you."

After exchanging some brief words, the knight goes back to his post.

After they enter the room, Arezel lets out a big sigh.

"Haaa~, to think that Souta-san would get angry."

And then she lies on the sofa.

"It was my bad, I unconsciously did so because I was annoyed."

Looking at Souta who gives an excuse with a face that clearly shows he's not reflecting on it, Narasu and Arezel only sigh.

"It was good that Souta-dono didn't raise his hand against the nobles, otherwise it would have been troublesome."

"Master is right, we might have been charged with treason."

The two are frowning.

"Well, it's fine. In case that king deem it not good..... I would still have overcome it somehow."

Hearing Souta who says that calmly, the two sigh again.

"But, because of this, Dina is not bound to this country, so in the end it's a good result."

"You're right, it's definitely a good result."

Showing a bright smile, Dina agrees with Souta.

"Ohhhh, they prepared new sweets. Moreover, it's a different kind from before!"

Roury goes straight to the table for the sweets just like before. Arezel, who feels down, regains her vigor once Roury feeds her the sweets.

"Master-Master, come here and eat, it's veryyy delicious!"

Looking at the perfectly same scenery as before the audience, Narasu joins the two with an expression that says "It can't be helped".

Souta and Dina also sit on the sofa, indulging themselves with the prepared sweets.

While they start to get excited talking about the audience and the journey so far, a knocking sound can be heard from the door.

"Excuse me, I come by the instruction of the king to bring you your souvenir."

As it's just like what the king said, Narasu goes to open the door.

"Here you go."

A man in butler clothes comes into the room with something covered in cloth in his hand. And then he shows what's beneath cloth to Souta and the others.

Chapter 66

A man in butler clothes comes into the room with something covered in cloth in his hand. And then he shows what's beneath cloth to Souta and the others.

Beneath it is a luxuriously decorated dagger, and on its handle there is the royal family crest engraved.

"It's a luxurious dagger indeed, but if I'm asked whether I want it or not..."
Souta only looks at it without taking it.

"So-Souta-dono, you'd better take this. With this, you can pass any checkpoint just by showing it, you can also get the permission to enter the royal castle as well."

As it's such a fine article, Narasu's voice is a bit shaky.

"It's amazing Souta-san!"

Arezel who also looks at it hops up and down in excitement.

"Ummm, let's say I receive this, and then I try to pass a checkpoint, right? And then they will instead say "You bastard!! Where did you steal this!"

"Tha-That possibility never crossed my mind... Umu~, it's indeed true. For a human to have this is hard to believe...."

Crestfallen, the man in butler clothes hangs his head with his shoulders slumped.

"Hahh~ even though I came in person with this kind of clothing, in the end it's no good....."

After the man dishevels his swept-back hair, remove his glasses, and his beard, what shows up is the face of the king they just met before.

"So, it really you...."

Souta already guess his identity so there is no hint of surprise in his demeanor.

"Eh-EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE HMPH HMPHHHHHH...."

Too surprised, Arezel shouts in a loud voice that might reverberate inside the castle. But before anyone knew it, Roury is already right behind Arezel and blocks her mouth.

"Yes, yes. Try to be quiet."

"HMPPPHH! HMPHMHMPH! Hmphh....."

Arezel tries to resist at first, but with Roury's strength, she can't move at all. Not long after, she gives up and stop stirring about.

"Hahh~hahh~ S-Sorry, I was surprised and reflexively shout..."

After being liberated, Arezel immediately apologizes to everyone.

"Yeah I understand your feeling, however, if your loud voice attracts the guards, the king will be in trouble you know?"

"Uuu~ Your Highness, I'm sorry."

After being cautioned by Roury, Arezel apologizes again with a disheartened expression.

"A-A~a, You don't need to worry that much. I will feel bad as it's because of my actions that you make that face."

After saying that, the king pets Arezel's head. Arezel who feels ticklish narrows her eyes.

"So, what do you need? You came here in person, there's no way that's the only reason right?"

"You don't change in any situation, do you... but, it's just like what you said, I'm here to apologize to Dina-sama. I apologize for the rude thing my subordinate said to you."

The king lowers his head. Everyone is surprised from his action that can be considered a serious matter if done outside of that room.

"P-Please don't worry. You already apologized during the audience, that's enough."

Hearing to that, the king raises his head, but his expression is serious.

"No, that time, I apologized as a king. Please let me apologize as my own person now, as Agradia."

Like that, he lowers his head again.

"You..... Agradia is your name?"

Rather than the king lowering his head, Souta is more interested with the name of the king.

"Eh, A~a, that's right. I also want to apologize to Souta-dono and the others..... I'm really sorry."

Souta absentmindedly looks at Agradia, who is lowering his head.

"It's just like what Narasu said before you came here. If it's Agradia that became the king, it shouldn't be bad."

"Isn't it."

"I agree."

"Right."

"Yep yep."

The other four nod, agreeing with Souta.

"D-Did I do something?"

Puzzled, he blurts out such words to Souta and the others' conversation.

"No, we're only saying that you're a good person."

"I-I see. In that case, thank you for your word, wait, is that fine?"

Watching Agradia who says his gratitude while still puzzled, everyone can't suppress their laughter as they find him amusing.

"Hahaha, as I thought, you're really interesting. You don't have to apologize anymore, and also, I'll receive the dagger. Instead, as a proof of friendship, I will give you this....."

After receiving the dagger, Souta looks around his magic bag, and then takes out the seedlings of lyashi trees.

"Let's do this. With this and this holy water, you can increase the yield of lyashi trees. After planting the seedling, just give it a few drops of this holy water."

Souta takes out a dozen seedlings and a bottle of holy water, and then hand them to Agradia.

Agradia's jaw drops as he looks at them wide-eyed.

"If my conjecture is right, the lyashi trees right now are the trees planted with the seedlings from the trees whose leaves were mostly taken, right?"

Considering the supply volume is considerably low, the seeds seem to be low quality ones."

"You know your stuff well. You're right, the lyashi trees right now come from weak seeds. The amount of leaves per tree is also low, so the distribution volume was inevitably reduced."

"So it really is the case, I thought it's really strange that lyashi tree leaves, which the original trees produce massively, are sold with that extraordinary price."

Answered by Narasu instead, Souta nods.

"Agradia ... Oi, Agradia!"

After being called the second time, Agradia regains himself.

"Wha-What is it?"

Why did you call? What is this sapling? The question he asks to Souta has these two meanings.

"This, is the seedling of the original Iyashi tree, not the weak one you have now. With this, I guess it will help restore the number of leaves per Iyashi trees in the future..... Right, Dina?"

"R-Really?"

Agradia looks back and forth between the seedling, Souta's face, and Dina's face.

"It's true, this is a seedling from a thousand years ago that I gave to Souta-san. If it helps solve the problem, then please use it."

Dina adds to Souta's words. She says that without hesitation, as if she understands perfectly Souta's aim.

"Thank you, Souta-dono. Thank you, Dina-sama."

Agradia then places the seedling to the side, and then lowers his head deeply, to the extent that his forehead might touch the floor.

The problem with Iyashi tree leaves is the root of the Elves' racial discrimination. Agradia hopes that by solving this problem, it will become a huge step toward the normalization of diplomatic relations with other countries.

"You don't need to lower your head this much..... More than that, we need you to inform the guards and the gatekeepers so we can use this dagger."

"Of course! It is no exaggeration to say that you're the savior of the country. I will make sure your travel in this country will happen without any inconvenience."

Agradia raises his head and then declares strongly with a deep nod.

Chapter 67

Once Agradia, who keeps expressing his gratitude, leaves the room, an air of relief fills the room.

"..... Dina, thank you."

"No... But is it fine with only that?"

As Dina knows what Souta refers to, she asks this.

"Ah, it's unnatural if I have them. I think your follow up was the optimal one." Souta and Dina look at each other, and then sigh.

"When I wonder what are you going to do, you suddenly pull those things out. It really surprises me. Even though the leaf itself can make an uproar..."

Remembering that scene, Narasu shudders.

"Well, I got this dagger, so in the end, the result is alright. That king too, as long as he has those seedlings, the elven country will surely improve even if only by a little. It might cause the minister a headache or two though."

"Ufufu, that minister seems to be struggling with anxiety too, doesn't he?" That minister looks very similar to the minister from before Dina was sealed. Remembering how the minister from that time also couldn't endure the anxiety, she laughs.

"Ah, that person really had it hard... Seems like every elven king is an oddball."

Considering the actions of the king that caused a headache for the minister and the king from his memories, who was also an odd one, that's the impression he gets from his few points of reference.

"Anyway, we don't have anymore business here, can we go back now?" Agradia, who already left the room, said nothing about what they needed to do now. Since there seemed to be no one who would come to that room afterward, Souta asks Narasu, who has some experience visiting the castle. "Hmm..... The reason we were here is to receive souvenir from the king, so doesn't that means it's fine to leave now? You can just show the dagger to pass anyway."

Answers Narasu after thinking for a bit.

"Well then, should we go back to the workshop quickly? There might be someone who wants to take a break as soon as possible from mental fatigue." Hearing that, only Arezel nods profusely.

"Roury, get ready to leave, we will return to the workshop soon."

Narasu urges Roury -who is eating the teacakes on the table-to leave.

"Yesss~ Souta-san, these fruits, can you put them into your bag?"

Roury brings the fruits that she can't finish eating to Souta.

".....Ohh well, fine. Pass them to me."

Somewhat amazed, Souta throws the fruits Roury carries one by one into the magic bag.

"Thanks!"

After she finishes passing all the fruits, she then stuffs the remaining sweets in her pockets.

"No that's fine. But, what is that, that childish behavior."

"Yes, that's her fault, but that freedom also leads to interesting ideas, so I can't deny it strongly....."

Narasu holds her head in her hands and shakes it. That action speaks loud about the distress she feels with regards to Roury.

"Because she's a mother of one child, there are lots of elves....."

In the middle of that exchange, a knocking sound from door can be heard.

"Excuse me, I would like to guide you on the way back, can I open the door?"

A somewhat familiar voice comes from behind the door.

"Ah, you can. We have also already finished our preparations here."

The door opens, and standing beyond the door is Dorusu, who guided them to the castle.

"Hello everyone. For returning back home, the task is once again left to me."

Dorusu lowers his head while smiling.

"You huh... Do we really need to bear with the crampedness again on our way back?"

Since it's a familiar face, Souta jokingly utters words of sarcasm.

"Hahaha, I hope you can pardon me for that. For the return travel, we have now

prepared another carriage so you can ride in two groups."

"Hahh~ That's a relief."

Souta thought that he would only deal with that after it was pointed out, so Dorusu preparing it ahead of time actually impressed him.

"Well then, guide us immediately."

"Understand, please this way."

Following the path they used when they came, Dorusu guides them to the entrance of the castle.

"How was your audience with the king?"

"Umm, various things happened, but let's just say the end result is good."

Answers Souta with only a little self-confidence.

"Is-Is that so... In any case, I'm glad that you came back without encountering major problems."

Dorusu already understands a bit of Souta's personality. A bead of sweat falls down his forehead as he already predicted that something would happen, only he doesn't dare to go too deeply into it.

Dina and Narasu both only listen to Souta's conversation, with Dina walking next to Souta, and Narasu one step behind them. Further back, there is Roury who is eating sweets, and Arezel who follows along while looking around restlessly.

Reaching the castle entrance, they can see the door is already open and two carriages are prepared outside.

Souta and Dina ride the previous carriage, with Dorusu as the coachman. The three from the workshop ride the other carriage, and the coachman is the one who previously brought them to the castle.

"Well then, I'll count on you until we reach the workshop."

"Yes, leave it to me. Let's go."

When Souta speaks through the small windows toward the coachman, Dorusu's answers come together with the horse's neighs as he handles the reins.

"Dina, I'm glad that you came with me but what will you do in the future? Even if that person is Soldia's enemy, at this point, he won't be alive anymore." Listening to Souta, Dina thinks with a serious look. For a while, silence fills the

carriage.

"For now, I have a house in the city of adventurer – Toura, so it might be good to take it easy there for a while."

Souta starts getting talkative, but Dina's expression is still pensive.

"..... I'm worried about the image sent by my older brother. As I thought at the time, I feel like it was not a mistake and there really was another person there. Not to mention, the expression of the hero of human race seemed unusual too. He might be already dead, but we might be able to get the truth from somewhere else, as we don't know anything now....."

Souta puts his hand on Dina's head as her expression starts to become gloomy.

"If it worries you that much, then there's surely something. If it weren't me who attacked Soldia in the first place, then why did the princess repatriate me? Why did the hero of human race stab Soldia? What happened to the princess who cast the repatriation magic? Was there really someone else in that place, and if there was, who?"

Souta also starts to talk about the matter that gnaws on his mind.

"Go back to my house and then let's solve the mystery together after you rest for a while. How about that?"

Souta smiles, and then talks to Dina with a strong will harboring in his eyes. They feel a strong connection to each other, as they are the only ones in the world who share their experience from a thousand year ago.

"Yes! I will do my best gathering as much information as I can."

"Don't push yourself, alright?"

Removing his hand from her head, they shake hands strongly.

Chapter 68

Once they reach the workshop, Souta and the others thank Dorusu and head inside.

Once inside the usual living room, Arezel throws herself onto the sofa and heaves a big sigh.

"Hahhh~ finally back home."

It seems like she was also nervous in the return carriage, and it was only now that her nervousness was blown away.

"Souta-san, give me the fruits."

Opposite of Arezel sits Roury, who already has a dish in hand and demands the fruits they got at the castle.

"A-A~a."

Even while surprised by Roury, who's already prepared in an instant, Souta still takes out the fruits and passes them to her.

"Yayy~, thanks Souta-san!"

Then Roury peels the skin with a kitchen knife that she also already prepared. She cuts them and arranges them on the dish.

"That's quite good knife handling, I can't see how she's a bad cook at all....."

"She's good at using a kitchen knife indeed, but that's it... As soon as the cooking involves seasoning, it becomes catastrophic."

Narasu tells the truth to Souta, who is impressed.

"Ahh – so it's the kind of person who adds too many things to the pot, huh..."

"Yeah that... No matter how much I told her, she would end up adding something that's not on the recipe unnoticed."

While Souta and Narasu converse about Roury's cooking skill, the person in question is only decorating the fruits one after another.

Because Souta thought about talking about their future plan, while waiting for Roury to finish, he gets down on the sofa.

Dina and Narasu also follow him and sit down.

"Let's wait until Roury finishes. After that, I want to talk about something

today."

The two nod in agreement and decide to watch over Roury's wonderful performance for a while.

"With this, just the beak left..... There, it's complete!"

There is a stunning bird represented there.

Souta, Dina, Narasu, and even Arezel only look at the finished product, unable to say anything.

"N? What's wrong... why the weird looks?"

She seems to be unaware of why the others are surprised, and then with one hand she breaks off one of the birdwing-shaped fruits.

"Aaaa~!!!"

The four suddenly let out a loud voice.

"Wha-What!? What's wrong?"

Roury is surprised by the four people who suddenly shout. She looks at the face of the four in order.

"Hahh~~..... No it's fine. Sorry for shouting suddenly."

Narasu with her resigned attitude.

"Right, don't mind it. It can't be helped, after all."

Souta with his comforting words.

"The shape was ruined before I knew it....."

Dina with a faraway look.

"When it comes to this, let's eat it together. It's delicious."

And Arezel who takes everything positively. Those are the reactions of those four people.

"Ummm, I don't quite understand, but..... Ohh well, it doesn't matter.

Because I'm able to do this well, let's eat it together."

Thus now, with Roury's invitation as a sign, they reach out for it.

These cuts fruits, as the fruits themselves are first-class fruits, the taste is guaranteed, and so a single bird is eaten in no time.

"That was delicious."

"Certainly, to use her hands as skillfully as that must not be an easy feat."

Dina and Souta are taking a break, Roury cleans up, and Narasu takes Arezel,

who fell asleep, to the bed.

The two who were resting initially wanted to help clean up as well and takes Arezel to her room, but they were refused as the other two don't want to inconvenience them.

In spite of taking a break, the majority of those two's heads is filled with the plan for their future journey.

After a while, Roury and Narasu, who finished their chores, return and then go to their seats.

"Arezel went to bed?"

"Yeah, it seems like she's very tired. She was sleeping so soundly that she didn't even wake up when she was being carried to the bed."

Remembering Arezel's sleeping face, Narasu smiles.

"Now then, I would like to tell you our future plan. You've taken care of us, so this is the least we can do."

"I don't think we have done something that serious, but I would be glad to accept if you say so."

"This Roury-san helped everyone when they were in a pinch, though."

She chides Narasu while puffing her chest proudly.

"Seriously you – know some modesty!"

Scolded, Roury only sticks out her tongue.

"Can we return to the topic?"

"S-Sorry."

Narasu lowers her head toward Souta, who shows a slightly troubled expression.

"Dina and I, once we return to my base in the city of adventurers, Toura, are thinking about going on a journey after that."

"A journey?"

Souta and Dina nod.

"We both have doubts about the battle with the Demon King a thousand years ago. Why was I repatriated? Based on the legend, it was to stop me who madly killed the other heroes. But from Dina's memories, Soldia was stabbed after I was repatriated. There is a difference between the order of events."

Souta looks at Dina with an expression asking for confirmation, and to it, Dina

nods, agreeing with him.

"From my case, in addition to that, there is still a possibility that there was another person present at the time. It's ambiguous because it's my older brother's memories when he was stabbed, but I can still feel the presence. My older brother's detection ability should have been top notch."

It's now Souta's turn to nod.

"That's why we're going to visit other races' countries to gather information and solve the mystery. Just like there is Dina in the elven country, there might also some other sources of information in other countries as well."

"So that's how it's. Unfortunately I don't have any information, I will send a letter to Carena's store. I don't know if it will help you, though."

"Thank you, I appreciate that."

"Then, this Roury-san will also go to Toura together with Souta-san."

It's a mystery how she reached that conclusion after listening to the entire story, but that's what she says.

"Seriously, this person is..... Why suddenly try to accompany them? For the most part, you're one of the few alchemists in this country, do you think the country will give you permission to leave for so long?"

Roury answers that question with a proud face.

"Fu~fu~fun, that's why I said with Souta-san. With that dagger, it pretty much means free pass, so if I'm with him, there is no way we will be pursued."

After she finishes speaking, she makes a peace sign.

"..... That's an unexpected answer. I can't imagine that with my usual behavior. Now if there is a problem, it's whether I will nod and agree to this or not."

Souta shows a difficult smile to Roury to test her. To that, Roury's face shows seriousness that he's never seen from her before.

"Reading Elmia-chan's letter, I thought about living together with her soon. But there was a time when I ran away from this country, so it's hard for me to leave the country. It would be difficult for Elmia-chan to come here by herself, and above all, it doesn't look like she will leave Carena Kaa-san behind. Carena Kaa-san won't want to come back here for the same reason as me..... That's why, I beg you, please bring me along to Toura."

She says so and bows deeply.

Roury spoke from her heart. It becomes quiet, and Souta silently waits for Narasu to speak up. He doesn't know how big the burden for the workshop will be if Narasu's disciple leaves her alone, so he can only assume it will be a heavy burden.

Despite that, he also understands Roury's feelings. This is precisely why he waits for Narasu, so they can understand each other.

"To think you thought that way..... I didn't know it at all. I will feel lonely here, and Arezel will surely cry too."

"I will talk to Arezel."

Narasu nods with a sad, lonely smile.

"Right, please do so. After all, that girl is attached to you somehow."

Narasu turns her head. Now she's facing Souta and she lowers her head. "Despite her being a poor disciple, can Souta-dono please let her accompany you? I beg of you."

Following Narasu, Roury also lowers her head once again.

".....Sure. I never planned to refuse in the first place. I just wanted to see if there is a good reason or she was just joking around. My bad."

Roury looks up with a bright smile on her face. "Phew~ Thank you. Souta-san, thank you, and Dina-sama too. Please take care of me."

Dina, who left the decision entirely to Souta, smiles and grabs Roury's outstretched hand for a handshake.

Chapter 69

"Never expected that you would cry like that."

In the carriage, while hugging her knees, Roury mutters something while crying her eyes out.

The three already left the Elven country and are on their way to Toura.

Souta grasps the reins while listening to the voice from the coach seat. Dina hands her a handkerchief without saying anything.



On the day Roury decided to leave, after dinner, she told Arezel that she would head to Toura with Souta and Dina.

Arezel who heard that turned pale. She stopped her meal there and went to shut herself in in her room.

Everyone was calling her from outside the room, but there was no reaction.

Next morning, Arezel had still yet to show her face and still secluded herself. In the end, the three started to prepare for their departure.

After the preparation of the carriage finished, and all they needed to do was leave the workshop. The only one there to say goodbye was Narasu.

Hidden beneath her usual cheerfulness was a shadow of gloominess. The inside of the carriage was filled with a depressed atmosphere.

Souta didn't open his mouth. He operated the carriage silently and proceeded to the checkpoint in the valley.

The process took some time, but because of the dagger, the talk proceeded more smoothly than before.

Even the matter of Roury accompanying Souta, although they were reluctant, they allowed her to pass.

And then when they passed the inspection and wanted to board the carriage, a voice calling for Roury from afar can be heard.

It was a mystery how she caught up to Souta's carriage in time, but Arezel really reached them before they left the checkpoint.

Roury got down from the carriage and walked toward Arezel, who was out of breath.

After handing a letter to Roury, Arezel began to cry loudly on the spot.

"I'm sorry, in reality, I wanted to talk more, uwwaa~~!!"

Hearing that, Roury also shed tears in the same way.

"It's fine... I suddenly... said that... it's because I didn't say it properly!!"

Then the two continued to shed tears while arguing who was at fault.

Souta and Dina watched them with warm eyes, while the staffs who were around only looked from afar, amazed.

About twenty minutes later, the two whose tears had finally stopped exchanged their words of farewell.

"Roury-sama, I'm sorry I ran away. We've been together for so long, so in shock, I didn't know what to do..."

"No, it's fine. I also don't know what to say. In the end, I just left like that."

"But ..."

Feeling that the two were going to be stuck in the same loop, Souta interjected.

"Rather than looking at who's at fault, you two won't be able to meet for a long time. Isn't there something more important you want to talk about?"

Arezel nodded, agreeing with Souta.

"Umm, thank you for everything so far. I'm having a lot, a lottttt~ of fun with Roury-sama. Even when Master and Souta went to the cave, you listened to my story and went there soon, so reliable..... So cool."

Tears spilled from her eyes even while she was talking, but she still said everything she want to without pause.

"Thank you, I also enjoyed the time with Arezel very much. And it's the same with Master, living with the two of you was really enjoyable. But, I'm sorry, I can't let Elmia, my daughter, stay separated from her mother all the time, as Elmia is as important as Arezel....."

Although their conversation still continued, Souta distanced himself so he couldn't hear them.

After they spoke for a while, at the end, Arezel gave something that looked like letters to Roury. The letters also included Souta and Dina's portions, though they received them from Roury instead of Arezel.

In the end, they were able to separate with smiles.



While holding the reins, Souta takes out the letter from Arezel, opens the seal, and reads it.

It starts with a thank you for Souta's help, followed by a short paragraph of Arezel's thoughts, and at the end, she requests him to take care of Roury and asks him to be strict with her.

"Arezel and Roury are like sisters. More specifically, a little sister who's worried about her problematic older sister."

Swept away by the wind, that mutter disappears and never reaches Roury.

When they arrive at the forest where Souta helped Arezel, they decide to take a break before entering.

After taking out fur instead of cushions from the bag, they sit on it and eat the meal that was also taken out from the bag.

Once their break is over, they enter the forest. While the essence of magic is still as dense as before, the trace of space magic that was used as a trap before is already gone.

Although he feels a presence that seems like it's observing them, since they don't show themselves or trying to do something to them, Souta decides not to mind it and just continues onward with a little haste.

From there, there is also nothing that happens on the road leading to Toura, and all in all, it's a smooth trip.

On the way, Roury got bored and muttered something disturbing. Fearing that she might trigger a flag, Souta was a bit anxious, but in the end they arrive at Toura without incident.

Before entering, Souta wears the camouflage bracelet. Also, Souta, who should be traveling alone, bringing along two elves makes a bit of a ruckus. But when he tells them that she's Elmia's mother, they stop questioning him and let them pass without trouble.

"First things first, let's go back to my house. After that... Why don't we go to Carena's shop after we leave the carriage?"

They nod at Souta's suggestion. They're a bit tired from the long journey in the

carriage, and as they hoped for a break in a place where they could rest comfortably, Souta's proposal is a wish come true.

Chapter 70

Before going home, they make a detour to the real estate agency. It's to take the key from Fuura, who was asked to manage the house. As they enter the shop, they find Fuura dozing off on the counter.

"Fuura... Oi, Fuura, wake up."

Since she's not waking up even after being called, Souta decides to shake her shoulder.

"Fuura, it's a customer. Hurry up and get up."

With that, she opens her eyes and raises her body.

"N, Ahhh."

She raises her face and looks at the surroundings, and after making sure Souta is there, she gradually wakes up.

"Finally, you got up. I want you to return the key, since I've come back..... Are you listening?"

"Fuwaa~..... Un... I'm listening."

Yawning, she stretches her body to wake up, and at last, she grasps the current situation.

"Fuhh-, I'm finally awake. Sorry, yesterday I was up late sorting documents." Fuura rises from her chair and greets him from the start again.

"Souta-san, welcome back, that was quick. I never thought you would finish in one month. Your purpose..... were you able to do it?"

She asks that while sending her gaze toward Dina and Roury behind Souta.

"More or less. By the way, one of them is not my companion, but Elmia's mother."

"Fuee~ El-chan's mother? I can't tell. No matter how I look at her, there seems to be no resemblance..... Wait, do you mean it's the golden-haired woman there who's El-chan's mother?"

She asks while pointing at Roury.

"Yess~ present. I'm Elmia-chan's mother, Roury. I'm planning to live in this city for the time being, please take care of me."

"..... Errr~, are they really parent and child?"

Fuura, whose hand is grasped by Roury for a handshake, sends a doubtful gaze to Souta. In response, Souta just deeply nods silently.

"Well, Roury will live in this town, you may meet again so you can stop at that. For the time being, I want you to return the key..."

"Oh, right. Please wait a moment."

After that, she enters the back room and brings out the key after a while.

"Sorry, I put it in a safe so I wouldn't need to be worried about losing a customer's possession. I will prepare the money now. Ummm....."

Fuura, who believes that trust in business is important, put the keys in the safe aside from when she took care of the house. In addition, the valuables and money she managed were also put in a safe, albeit a different one.

"No, just keep it for now. It's been decided that I'll go on a journey again after a while, that money is set aside for that time, is that okay?"

Fuura, who was going to open the safe, stops her feet, and then nods to Souta.

"Got it, please tell me if you need it."

"Now then, the key is returned. Also when I go on a journey again, I'll tell you. At that time, please take care of it too."

"Yess~ I'll definitely take care of it. Also, Roury-san and that person over there too, please come if you need to rent a room, here we also have information on property for rent."

"Yes, I will leave it to you at that time."

"I wonder if I should live with my mother for the time being."

Dina and Roury answer differently, and then they leave the store.

After leaving the real estate agency, they go straight to Souta's home.

Upon reaching his residence, Dina and Roury stare at the mansion.

"Is this your house, Souta-san?"

Dina imagined it to be an ordinary home, hence her surprise when she learns it's the size of a mansion when they arrive.

"S-Souta-san is rich, aren't you?"

Roury also imagined the same, so she's also surprised at the size of the mansion.

"Ah, I wanted to use it as a base, so I wanted it to be spacious. The number of

people might increase more and more, so having spacious base will prevent us from feeling cramped."

While replying to the two, Souta opens the magic wall using the key magic tool.

"W-What did you do just now? You turn the key at empty space, didn't you?"

"Ah, this huh. This is that sort of magic tool. I made it with my companion on the journey of the old days."

Roury is shocked by Souta's remark. It's a high-level magic tool seen for the first time, moreover, he says he made it. Of course, alchemy by itself is not enough to make it, but knowing that an unknown alchemy technique was surely used surprises her.

"Well, since the development also stopped at the prototype stage, it hasn't been circulated to the world, I think there are only two or three of these that exist."

"Tell me the manufacturing method..... It's impossible to do, isn't it?"

Souta shakes his head lightly.

"I feel bad, but this is impossible. I didn't make it alone, moreover, it's dangerous depending on the usage. If it's the one we made, I can track the item from the outflow of magic power one way or another. It will be troublesome if there's an exception to this."

"Right, sorry. I'm just saying, don't worry about it."

Roury apologizes to Souta with her shoulders slumped.

"Now then, it's already open, so let's enter."

Upon entering the gate, they go to Ed's resting place and remove the carriage body.

"Well then, Ed, we'll be inside, so call me out if there is something."

After Ed nods to him, Souta takes meals and water to Ed's resting place.

After entering the room and escorting the two into the living room, they fall onto the sofa.

"Ah~ so tired~"

"As expected, I'm also tired....."

Fatigue from a journey over a long distance and a long period of time, on top of which is mental fatigue from coming to a place they're not accustomed to, all of that comes at them with full force now they've reached a place to rest.

Only Souta doesn't show tiredness, and he prepares a meal and cold drinks in front of the two. The smells stimulate the two's appetites, and so they manage to wake themselves and eat the lunch vigorously. It seems like they're quite hungry, so Souta then serves an additional meal.

After finishing the meal, the two lean on the sofa and fall asleep.
"Although we planned to go to Carena's shop after a while..... waking them up right now would be pitiful for them."

Souta takes out a blanket from his dimensional storage and lays it over the two people. After that, he starts washing the dishes and heating the bath water.

They wake up by the time the sun is about to set.

Chapter 71

Dina stirs her body, after moving for a bit, she slowly raises her head.

"Oh, are you awake?"

Souta asks her while closing the book he was reading.

"Fuwaa~~, Ehh..... Did I fell asleep?"

She yawns and speaks to Souta while rubbing her tired eyes.

"Ah, both of you did right after you finished your meal."

Dina narrows her eyes, looks around restlessly and discovers the sleeping Roury.

"Uuu, I'm still sleepy. Fuwaa~~"

She yawns again, this time with her hand covering her mouth.

"The door over there leads to the kitchen. You should wash your face, I poured water into the tub there. Use this to wipe your face, and then just discard the used water."

Souta takes out a towel and hands it to Dina.

"Thank you."

Her step when she heads toward the door is unsteady because she just woke up, but she manages to get to the kitchen somehow.

By the time Dina returns after washing her face, Roury wakes up, and just like Dina, she also washes her face.

Although the two who already finished washing their face look drowsy, they still have a more refreshed look compared to when they just woke up.

"It's almost time for the sun to set now."

After Souta says so, the two look out the window. The color of the sunlight coming through the window also shows that Souta is saying the truth.

"S-Sorry, I unintentionally ..."

"I'm sorry....."

Following Dina, Roury bows her head apologetically.

"No, that's fine. I just want to reconfirm how much time we have now. It's this time of the day, but let's discuss what to do now."

Listening to that, Dina nods, while Roury stiffens.

"Roury, what do you want to do? Are you going to Carena's place, no, rather, do you want to go to Elmia's place now? Or are you going there tomorrow afternoon?"

"Errr, ummm, unnnn..... What should I do, I wonder."

Roury, who's scared to meet her daughter, can't answer immediately, and her eyes are wandering aimlessly.

"Roury-san, you should go today. Once you postpone it to tomorrow, you're going to have to suffer until tomorrow right? Perhaps, when tomorrow comes, you will again postpone it to the day after that, and postpone it again, and again, and keep going without end."

Roury silently listens to Dina's words.

"Beside..... Isn't the one suffering the most here Elmia-san, who has never met her mother since birth? Isn't it a mother's responsibility to reduce her suffering even if it's only by one day?"

After saying that much, she stops spinning her words and just quietly stares at Roury.

Although her heart is touched from Dina's remarks, there is still hesitance in it. The daughter who was entrusted to Carena right after she was born while Roury went back to her home country, what kind of face will she show her mother? What kind of abusive words will she receive? Now that her distance from her daughter is so small, those kind of thoughts are circling around in her head.

"Roury, if you go today, Dina and I will go as well. But if you do it tomorrow, I will only take you to the front of the shop, and from there, you'll have to go by yourself."

"Eh....."

As Roury thought that he would accompany her to the end, she's shocked by his words.

"We also have something we must do, we can't keep you company forever."

The way Souta words it is just like he's throwing her out, while it's actually more like him trying to make her act now. He knows Elmia, and while he doesn't know the contents of the letter Elmia's gave to her, Roury's expression when he

handed her the letter was very serious. Considering that, he wants this parent-child pair to meet face-to-face as soon as possible.

"Uuu... Souta-san is unfair. If you say it like that, then I have no choice but to go today."

Souta and Dina smile at her words.

"Alright, let's leave immediately. Your stomach is filled, you also already got to sleep, so all preparations are complete."

After saying that, Souta immediately goes to the entrance.

"Eh, right now?"

Roury looks at Souta's face in amazement.

"That's right, it'll just get darker, so the sooner we go, the better."

Dina also stands and follows Souta.

"W-Wait for mee~"

Roury hurriedly chases the two in panic. The two who succeeded in getting Roury out of the house look at each other and laugh.

On the way to Carena's shop, at Roury's proposal, they decide to buy a souvenir. At first, they think that Roury just wants to stall for the time so they will end up going tomorrow, however, after looking at how serious Roury's face is, the two who suspect her reflect on the inside.

After a couple of rounds and the shopping is done, they head straight to the alchemist shop.

When they arrive at the front of the store, Roury's legs stop.

"What's wrong? Let's go in."

Souta tries to put his hand on the door, but Roury runs toward Souta to stop him.

"W-Wait! Please wait!"

Souta opens the door while avoiding Roury. Roury's outstretched hands end up pushing empty air, making her lose balance and stumble and roll into the shop.

"Waaaaaa~~~~ Ouch ouch ouch ouch."

"A-Are you okay?"

"What's with the commotion!?"

Elmia and Carena both rush to see the source of the sound.

"S-Sorry, it's because Souta-san avoided it..... Wait, what!"

Roury turns her head, intending to glare at Souta, however, all she can see is a closed door.

"You..... You're Roury aren't you!"

Hearing Carena, Elmia is surprised.

"O-Okaa-san? Are you Okaa-san?"

Roury notices that there is no way to escape and decides to steel her nerves.

"Un, I'm your mother. Elmia, Kaa-san..... I'm sorry."

Roury lowers her head to the two while still in a sitting posture.

"Okaa-san, Ogaa-swann~~~~"

Elmia hugs Roury and starts crying loudly.

"E-Elmia-chan..... I'm sorry for leaving you alone all this time."

Embracing Elmia, tears also spill from Roury's eyes as she pats her head.

"Seriously both of you..... Fuhh~ don't sit on a place like that and come over here. Let's talk about it over a cup of tea or something."

Carena thought about yelling at her daughter who just showed her face for the first time in a long while. But her anger has scattered, as Elmia already stole her timing.

"Un! Let's go Elmia-chan. Even after this, we will be together forever."

"Okaa-san..... I'm happy."

The two wipe their tears, and then they head back to the room.

The two who are listening to them from the outside feel their cheeks loosen after knowing that the matter is settled amicably, and they flip the store's sign to say "closed."

Chapter 72

After confirming that Carena and Elmia accept Roury, Souta and Dina head to the adventurer's guild.

When they enter the guild, there is a short commotion; after that, some people Souta is acquainted with talk to him.

"Oh, if it isn't Souta. I heard that you went far away, but you unexpectedly came back early..... Oi, come here for a bit."

After saying that, the three brothers bring Souta away from Dina.

So that Dina doesn't hear what they say, Garu speaks to Souta in a hushed voice.

"Oioi, what's with that woman? Isn't she like, a friggin' beauty."

"Milfa-san, then Airi-san, and now this. We really can't leave you alone."

Geru added to his brother's words.

"Somehow, only beautiful women gather around Souta..... someday, he's gonna get stabbed."

Goru, with glassy eyes, says something dangerous.

"She is... the little sister of my old comrade. I was reunited with her in the Elven country and brought her along..... for various reasons. It'd help if you don't ask too much about it."

The three who talk in a teasing, envious tone feel disappointed and decide not to pursue it as Souta responds to their banter with unexpected seriousness.

"Well, if that's the case ..."

"Let's not pry too deep."

"It can't be helped."

Like that, the three release Souta.

After Souta returns to Dina, the three are surrounded and questioned by other adventurers who want to know the story, but are unable to ask Souta directly. However, not only do the three not get much information, they also meet the misfortune of being surrounded by people with disgruntled faces.

"Souta-san, is it fine to just leave those three like that?"

"Ah, they've become good scapegoats. I'll let them answer the questions in my place."

Souta thought that he'd let the first curious person who questioned him become a substitute to answer the questions of others who were interested. Those three are the people who got caught in this strategy.

With the attention redirected from them to the other three, Souta and Dina head to the counter to report Souta's return and to register Dina as an adventurer.

There is only one free counter, and, by chance, the person behind that counter is Milfa.

"..... Welcome back, Souta-san"

Milfa, who sees the two coming, gives her greeting after a moment of pause.

"Ah, I'm back. I'm here to report my return to the city and also to register her as an adventurer."

Prompted by Souta's remark, Dina steps forward.

"My name is Dina. Nice to meet you."

"Eh, ahh, my name is Milfa; nice to meet you too."

While enchanted by Dina's appearance as she bows with a smile, Milfa returns a similar greeting.

"I can explain about the guild myself, so let's just register for now. Can I leave it to you, Milfa?"

"A-yes, it's fine... please fill out this form."

The same paper from when Souta registered is handed to Dina. After looking over the paper, Dina fills it fluidly with skilfully-formed letters.

"... This should be fine right? I've more or less filled in all the blanks."

Milfa takes it and checks each item, one by one.

"Yes, all good. I will transfer the contents of the form to the card then."

When the form is set on the card, the contents are engraved.

"The transfer is complete. Next, please place a drop of your blood on this card. Here is a tool if you need it."

"Thank you."

With the prepared needle, Dina pricks the tip of her finger and drips her blood onto the card.

"Yes, with that, it's done. Because the explanation about the guild is unnecessary, the registration is over with this, but are there any questions?"

"Ummm..... Nothing in particular for now, but, if I need to, I will stop by."
After thinking for a while, Dina replies so.

"I see. Well then, thank you for registering. Please don't hesitate to visit if there are any problems."

Milfa feels like she has seen Dina's face somewhere before. It bothers her, but, as she's in the middle of the job, she ignores it and continues her work without voicing her feelings.

With their business concluded, they leave the adventurer guild.
Other than Dina's name, and the fact that she's the little sister of Souta's old comrade, the adventurers who can't get much information are noisily talking about their conjecture. Among them, Milfa ponders, trying to clear the suspicion that she gets when she looks at Dina, but, no matter what, she can't recall what exactly it is.

"Now then, you have an identity card with this."
"I'm relieved, even a person from a thousand years ago can make it normally."
The latter part is said in a voice so small that only Souta can hear it.
"Well, because I could make it, I thought it would be okay, so I didn't say anything..... Were you anxious?"

"A little, I think?"

She answers Souta while making an opening of 1 cm wide with her thumb and index finger.

"Because I believe that no matter what happens, Souta-san will definitely protect me."

Dina says that while winking.

"..... That's kind of, unfair."

Being winked at by a beauty, Souta is at a loss for words.

"Ufufu~ Where are we going next?"

"Ummm, I originally planned to go to the library, but....."

It's already dark, and the library should be closed too.

"Let's go there tomorrow then, for now, let's eat a meal and then head home. I think I already told you, but I'd like to say hello to the staff of the inn I stayed at

before, we can eat in their dining room. How about that?"

"Yes, I will also come."

Dina doesn't oppose Souta's proposal. Her smiling expression doesn't change, but as she already heard the prowess of Gordon, the chef of that inn on the way to Toura, she feels pleased deep down.

When they arrive at the inn, they enter. Then, with a cheerful voice, Miri greets the two.

Chapter 73

"Welcome!"

Upon entering the inn, Miri greets them with a cheerful voice. However, despite her tone, her expression is stiff.

"Miri, I'll introduce her. She's Dinarius, my old comrade's little sister. Because of some circumstances, I'm going to travel with her now. Today, we came here to have some food."

"Dinarius. Please call me Dina. Miri-san, nice to meet you."

Although she's shocked that Souta brought along a woman she doesn't know, her surprise disappears before Dina's smile.

"Errr, I'm the daughter of this inn's owner, Miriana. You can call me Miri. Nice to meet you too."

"Yes, I already heard the story from Souta-san, but you're really cute."

"Eh! C-Cute? Me? That..... For that to come from a person as beautiful as this. Moreover Souta-san also said so, hawa~"

Miri covers her face, which has turned bright red, though, because of her fidgeting, her action shows her embarrassment.

"Ufufu~, as I thought, you're really cute."

With that remark, Miri's fidgeting increases.

"Let's stop playing around already. We can't continue like this."

"It would be great if you do so. Hey, Miri-chan, I'll handle the rest, so you help your father out."

Unable to just watch any longer, Milfana pushes Miri into the dining room.

Because Miri still wants to talk with Souta and Dina, she has a dissatisfied expression when she's pushed, but, when she starts to serve another guest, there is only the smile of the daughter of the inn on her face.

"I'm sorry Souta-san, and also, Dina-san, right? Do you want to eat today?"

"Ah, are there any vacant seats?"

"There are. However, it might be a bit noisy because there are other customers....."

Milfana is apologetic as she sends a fleeting glance at the dining room.

"You don't mind, right?"

"Yes. I'm looking forward to the delicious food!"

Dina replies immediately.

"In that case, there are vacant seats at the back. Please, this way."

When they set their foot on the dining room, the hustle and bustle inside instantly quiet down. This inn is affiliated with the guild, so many of the customers are adventures, and many of them know Souta. Their eyes gather on Souta, who has appeared in this city after a long time away, and especially on the silver-haired elf behind him.

Souta and Dina know they're being watched, but they go to the table without worrying about it.

"Now then, what shall I eat I wonder."

After taking a look at the menu which is prepared on each table, Dina is troubled, unable to choose.

"How about the chef's recommendation. If it's that, the chef will surely bring out something that he has confidence in, you can look forward to the taste."

An expression of anticipation appears on Souta's face.

"I'll do that too!"

Looking at Souta's expression, Dina decides to order the same.

When Miri comes near them, they call out to her and order two orders of the chef's recommendation. Even though her face reddens when she speaks to the two, she still performs her waitressing duties.

After a while, as they converse, Miri brings their meals.

"Yes, here is today's chef's recommendation, [Flying Dragon Steak]!"

There is a large serving of flying dragon steak on each plate. As the garnish, there's a corn-like thing, as well as sauteed potatoes.

When cutting with a knife, the blade passes through the meat without resistance, and juices overflow from the meat. Then, they bring the meat to their mouths.

""Superrr delishhh!""

Dina's choice of word is something unimaginable, considering her usual speech.

Gordon's food is just that wonderful, making words like that come out unconsciously. Speaking of flying dragon's meat, it's said that it tastes good, but its flesh is very hard to chew. However, when the meat enters their mouths, it's as soft as marbled beef, so soft that, after chewing just a few times, the meat is gone. The sauce which was applied also compliments the meat's qualities perfectly. It's just a light sauce, but, because of that, it promotes the naturally strong flavor of the meat.

"N, excuse me. But, this is very tasty. Now I know why Souta-san recommended it."

"I know, right! There's a lot of street vendors in this city, but the food here is one, no, two or three levels higher than theirs."

Dina wears an ecstatic expression, while Souta excitedly talks about the wonders of cooking.

Their voices grow louder over time, but they're still drowned out by the hustle and bustle of the dining room.

However, their voices still reach Miri's ears when she's near them. And so she happily tells Gordon about what she heard. Hearing it, Gordon only shows the stern expression of a cook, but, looking at his restless movements when he cooks, Miri understands that he's delighted.

"Fuu, that was delicious. I carelessly ordered dessert too, but it seems like it was the right choice."

"Yeah, they're all perfect, they're far more delicious than the food I ate before." Even though Dina, who'd lived in the royal palace, is the child of a maid, she's still a member of the royal family, so of course her meals were also made by the top chef in the Elven kingdom. However, Gordon's food in comparison is still head-and-shoulders above theirs.

"Haha, that's a great evaluation. Well, then again, I guess it can't be helped as the meals there are more for work than enjoyment....."

As a hero, Souta was invited to the royal palace before, so he also attended dinner there, but there wasn't much conversation. Instead of having a meal, Dina and her brother felt more like they were sitting on a bed of nails.

"The past is just the past. What's more important now is having a meal together with Souta-san now, and that Gordon-san's food is very delicious!"

Dina seems to have gotten over the past and is now enjoying the food here from the bottom of her heart.

Looking at her smile that comes from her heart, Souta also smiles naturally. With their atmosphere that others can't seem to enter no matter what, Miri looks at them with a slightly sad face.

Chapter 74

Satisfied with the meal, the two spend some time relaxing while enjoying after meal tea.

"Hmmm, the main dish, the dessert, and even this black tea are all very satisfying."

She enjoys the scent of the black tea, the sweetness of the accompanying cookies, as well as the slight bitterness of the tea.

"I'm not that good with tea, so I was worried when I was served tea with different leaves."

Souta talks about when he mentioned his dislike of black tea when he stayed at the inn before; since then, the tea served to him all are similar to Japanese tea.

After the customers settle down, and the seats gradually empty, Gordon comes out to meet Souta and Dina.

"It's unusual for you, who's always secluding yourself in the kitchen, to come out."

He approaches the table without changing his expression, despite what Souta says.

"You are the chef here, right? Today's meals were very delicious. Thank you very much."

While staying seated, Dina bows courteously and thanks Gordon.

"A-Ah, no, it's fine. As this is my job, it's good as long as you're satisfied."

Facing Dina's frankness, Gordon replies despite being flustered

"It's great that I can eat this for the first time after a while. I can have peace of mind with your skills. Today's food was also very delicious."

"Ou, I added my own flare to the meat-softening technique that Souta taught me, and it went unexpectedly well. Thanks."

Gordon doesn't take the credit for himself. He believes from the bottom of his heart that it was due to Souta's advice instead of his hands, and because he wanted to tell it to Souta straight from his mouth, he especially came out of the kitchen to meet him.

"Well then, I will go back."

Because that's all he wanted to do, Gordon, whose face has remained the same from beginning to end, leaves.

"Is Chef-san angry or something?"

Looking back, Dina mutters anxiously.

"No..... That's a delighted expression. That he came out here personally is proof. His tail was also swaying slightly."

"That is, I didn't notice..... But, if so, then that's good."

After Souta says that, Dina shows a relieved expression.

"Now then, our stomachs are filled, and we've rested well enough..... Let's go home."

As they took their time, it's already become late. All the shops, other than eating places, have closed already.

"Right, and the investigation will finally start tomorrow! What kind of information will we find, I wonder....."

"When I went to the library before, I looked into the basics of each country's description and current condition. After that, I found a book about the battle with the Demon King a thousand years ago, so I read that."

"Because the purpose is different this time, you may find something if you look from a different perspective. Besides, I will be with you this time."

Dina makes a fist and gets fired up.

"I have high expectation on you. After all, you're the only one who can see eye to eye with me right now. It'd be great if we could find something, but..... Oh right, Miri, I'm going to pay."

Souta calls their server, Miri, and pays for the food.

"Yes..... It's the exact change. Thank you very much."

While working, she has been watching the two. Various thoughts fill her head, but she answers Souta with a smile without letting her thoughts show on her face.

"I said it to Gordon earlier, but it was delicious. Thank you, I'll come again."

"It was really tasty."

They thank Miri with a smile and leave the store.

When they get outside, it's already dark. They walk while relying on the light from the magic tools installed at regular intervals along the road like street

lights and on light from the stores that are still open. They pass some drunkards occasionally, but it's an otherwise quiet night, with fresh air and stars shining radiantly in the night sky.

Ed gets up when they come home and welcomes them.

The next morning, the two depart from the house just in time for the opening of the library. They have breakfast at a street stall. As they walk slowly, by the time they reach the library, a quarter of the library's opening hours have passed.

In the library, they are welcomed by the same male and female librarians who welcomed Souta last time.

"Welcome..... The personage there has already made use of this facility. Thank you for visiting again."

The one who says that is the male librarian. After saying that to Souta, he moves his eyes toward Dina.

"As for you, this is your first time using this library, am I right?"

"Yes, this will be my first time using this library. I have been to other ones, but, if it's not a hassle, could you give me a quick introduction?"

Understanding that Dina wants information, he nods and begins his explanation.

"Dina, I'm going ahead."

As Souta has already heard the explanation, he pays two gold coins to the female librarian and walks over to the shelves, looking at the memo that the female librarian passed to him. The investigation this time is to reconfirm the information about the four tribes, aside from the Elven tribe, which he has already investigated. The ones that particularly concern Souta are the ones that didn't show up in Dina's memories when using Pair Connect: the Beastmen tribe, the Gnome tribe, and Dwarven tribe.

The two heroes from Dragonkin and Elven tribes are guaranteed to be dead. Dina said that there might be another person there. Souta thought that, if so, then it's possible that the other person is one of the other three heroes. Based on that, the possibility of it being the Beastmen tribe's hero is low, because he was fighting together with them in the same place. Souta takes out the books about the other two races to look for information about them.

After taking out the relevant books, he heads to the reading table. Dina comes chasing him shortly after.

"Those two are quite interesting. They're incongruous, but somehow match each other well..... a nice combination."

Dina whispers in the quiet library. Souta is reminded of the time he first met those two, and, hearing Dina's opinion, he agrees.

"Ah, they're still the same like before."

Dina sits across from Souta and picks up a book prepared by him.

"First, I think I'll investigate the gnomes and dwarves, especially the gnomes, because when I checked before, it seemed that they don't have any territory anymore, and they live scattered in small settlements. Dina, read the story first, and then help me."

"Understood..... So this is the story about the battle of the heroes and the Demon King a thousand years ago."

After confirming that, Dina starts to read with a serious expression, and Souta looks through the prepared materials next to him.

The stories written in the book differ in many ways compared to Dina's Pair Connect memories. As she continues reading, her expression grows dubious.
"This is....."

Unconsciously, without saying it to anyone in particular, Dina's voice leaks.

"Then, doesn't it mean Souta-san is the bad guy in this story! It's wrong, Souta-san is not such a person!!"

Dina's agitation bursts forth, and she speaks with a loud voice as she stands up.

"Dina... This is a library you know. Keep your voice down."

Souta understands Dina's anger, but he decides to calm her down by purposefully asking her to keep her voice down.

"Ahhh ... I'm sorry."

Because there is no one else around besides Souta, they don't bother anyone, but Dina sits back while feeling discouraged.

"I understand the feeling, because I already read it before. I want to know the person who spread this information and called it the truth. I want to review other information, and, by combining the information we have on hand, we might be able to get closer to the truth."

"I understand."

Understanding the original purpose from Souta's words, Dina goes back to reading the story with a serious expression as if shaking off her sad feeling.

Chapter 75

To keep the books' pages from yellowing, the library uses opaque curtains to block out sunlight, and the inside is illuminated by light magic tools.

Similarly, the room temperature and humidity are also managed by magic tools. Dina shivers from the room temperature that makes her feel somewhat chilly. Noticing this, Souta puts a blanket on her knees.

"Thank you."

Dina smiles gently and thanks Souta in a hushed voice.

"Hm."

Souta answers with a short word that can't be considered a reply.

Some time has passed since Souta and Dina started their investigation, however, there are no other visitors who come to the library beside them. There are only the sounds of turned pages resounding between the two. Thanks to that, nothing disturbs their concentration, and they finish reading the books one after another.

When the already-read pile exceeds five books, Souta stretches his body.

"Hu—nnnnn, so tired. Dina, it's almost lunch time, should we take a break?"

Hearing that, Dina raises her head.

"I agree. It's interesting to know various things that have changed, but as expected, my shoulders after reading continuously are....."

To loosen her stiff shoulders and increase her blood circulation, Dina turns and stretches her shoulders around.

Souta ends the stretching he can do in a sitting position, retrieves the blanket from Dina, and puts it in his dimensional storage.

Souta stands up. After stretching his lower body lightly, he goes to the shelves with the stack of already read books that were on the table.

Upon reaching the target shelves, he checks the book numbers and returns them to their proper places.

"Did you find anything?"

Souta asks Dina while putting the books back on their shelves.

"Umm, I found many things, but whether it will lead us the truth is a little..."

Dina tilts her head as she answers Souta and passes him the books.

"Mine are also questionable. For now, we shouldn't look for new information, instead focusing on the difference between the known truth and our memories."

When the two, stood side by side, return the books to the shelves while groaning, the female librarian comes over.

"What kind of book are our dear guests looking for?"

In the last visit, Souta got information from the book she picked out. It reminds him that his work progressed smoothly because her selection of books was on point.

"Hmm, it's difficult to explain..... There are some books about the story of the battle of heroes with the demon king a thousand years ago, right?"

Souta decides to explain while showing her the cover of the book.

"With this story as a basis, we want to find different ones, or something like that..... I don't know how to explain it well either."

Souta scratches his head while frowning. The librarian is trying to comprehend Souta's explanation by breaking it to part.

"... I do not know if I can find the exact material you wished for, but I will try to look for it in a bit."

Souta stops his hand that's scratching his head and looks at her with a surprised expression.

"Is it okay?"

She nods.

"Perhaps, the feeling of congruity comes from reading many books. In the first place, there are some strange parts in that legend."

"... If ... If the hero from that story didn't kill his fellow heroes. Can you add this as precondition and find it?"

Feeling some kind of sympathy from the female librarian, Dina, who only listened quietly until now, adds that information.

"I see, that is an interesting one. That story had become widespread, and I have heard it since childhood, so I never had any doubts. But... In that case ..."

She enters thinking mode while mumbling with her hand on her mouth.

"Hey, you, hey, are you okay?"

Souta shakes her shoulder lightly while calling her out to recover her sense.

"Hah. I-I am sorry. I lost myself when I am thinking..... I will look for the book now. In the meantime, our dear guests should go and have lunch."

"I'll leave it to you. I feel it's a bit in a stalemate. I want something to break through it."

"Sorry to trouble you, but thank you."

Souta and Dina lower their heads towards the librarian.

"I-It is fine. This is something that I like, so please do not mind it."

Lowering her head a little, she hides her blushing face with her hair.

"Thank you. As we might disturb you, I'll ask you later."

"Don't mind if you can't find it, please, just think of it as a bad luck that you can't find it."

Leaving her behind, the two head to the entrance of the library.

This time, they're stopped by the male librarian.

"Excuse me, has our staff inconvenienced you?"

Souta and Dina exchange glances.

"No, rather, she offered her assistance with our research."

The male librarian covers his face with one hand.

"Haa~, even though I already told Rena not do more than her duties..."

"As for us, that's an incredibly helpful offer. Does it inconvenience her?"

With a slightly uneasy expression, Dina asks the male librarian.

"No, if it is about the introduction to a book, it is fine because it is included in our duty, but as for helping with research, I'm worried that the burden might be too great as she also needs to do it alongside her original job."

From his words, it's known that he doesn't hate Rena.

"If so, was it a mistake to help out?"

"No, your worry is unnecessary. Fortunately, while I don't know if it will stay like this or not, there are only two of you as visitors today. As there shouldn't be that much of a difference in the afternoon, I'll also cover for her."

He answers so, while shaking his head toward Souta.

"My bad, this time, your burden will increase."

"Fufufu, it's fine, I've always been at her mercy. Besides..... it's important research isn't it? Our dear guests' faces when reading seem to be quite

serious."

"Were you watching? It's not something that needs to be hidden, but, it's not an exaggeration that what we do will influence the future."

Dina nods agreeing with Souta.

"Then all the more, don't hesitate to make use of our skills. We're glad that someone finds our books to be useful."

He answers with a proud smile. Although the two approach their work differently, it seems that at heart, their love for books is the same.

Chapter 76

They leave the library, and after walking for a bit, they find a cafe and decide to go in.

Although it is not a big store and lacks gaudy decoration, the atmosphere of the store is calm. The two like it at first sight.

They also decide to sit in the open terrace. On a sunny day like today, they hope to eat their meal while enjoying the gentle breeze and admiring the scenery outside.

After being guided to their seats, Dina groans while looking at the menu. "I've decided on this hamburg lunch..... What are you desperately worrying about, Dina?"

"I'm not sure which of these two cakes I want to order....."

Dina is troubled with dessert.

"Both would be fine right?"

"No, it's an attractive proposal ... but I feel like I'm eating too much."

She feels shaken for a moment by Souta's suggestion, but she shakes off the temptation and continues to worry about her decision.

"By the way, have you decide on the main course for lunch?"

"Yes, I've decided on that one. I want this one."

What she points at is a pasta-style noodle dish.

"I see... Excuse me, I'd like to place an order."

Souta raises his hand and calls the waitress. Dina, who's still troubled with choosing her dessert, begins to hurry when she notices.

"Yes, may I ask your order?"

"Err, I am..."

"I will have this hamburg lunch and this dish, one each. Also, I want this cake and this one, also one each."

Souta orders fluently. Dina is still troubled, but he orders anyway, while Dina watches Souta with discontent.

"I will repeat your order: one hamburg lunch, one tomato flavored pasta, one white berry cake, and one white cheesecake. Is that all?"

"Ah, I'll leave it to you then."

Closing the order list, the waitress returns to the back.

"Geez, why did Souta-san arbitrarily order like that. I'm seriously troubled, you know!"

Dina puffs her cheeks and gives words of reproach to Souta.

"My bad my bad, but if you're as troubled like that, doesn't that mean you actually want to eat both?"

"That is! That's... right."

Wanting to reproach Souta, delighting in being able to eat both, and fearing eating too much, those three feeling mixed inside of her.

"Don't worry, if you eat half of both, won't it become only one cake's worth? That means you can eat both cakes without eating too much."

"A. Yes. That's right isn't it..... fufufu."

At first, she's surprised that she doesn't realize that sooner and lets out a smile after understanding that she can eat both without hesitation.

"It's good now that you realize. I should've explained it first, my bad."

Souta apologizes to Dina for doing things out of order.

"No, me too, for getting angry without noticing that, I'm sorry."

Dina also lowers her head. With both of them lowering their head, realizing how funny what they're doing is right now, they burst out laughing.

With the dangerous atmosphere calmed, the two start to chat. Not long after that, the main dishes they ordered come at almost the same time.

""Itadakimasu.""

They put together their hands and start eating after the Japanese style prayer.

The guests that see that all look at them with a strange expression.

"Yeah, it's delicious. I was slightly making light of the hamburg in this cafe, but it's juicy, the meat is overflowing with juice, and more than anything, this sauce is good."

Souta steadily eats the hamburg, the meat going into his mouth one bite after the other without stopping.

On the other hand, Dina is eating the pasta with a happy expression. The way she uses her fork so that the sauce won't splash onto her clothes, coupled with Dina's original aura, serves to show off her beauty. As proof, all the men's eyes

are glued to Dina.

Some also have their ears pulled by the women they were eating with.

"Souta-san, this one is also very good. Here, please eat."

Dina takes her food with the fork and holds it out in front of Souta. When he puts it into his mouth, his expression changes into a smile.

"Yeah, it's delicious. This hamburg is also delicious..... Here."

This time, Souta brings a slice of meat toward Dina. The male guests who are watching them are now sending gazes full of jealousy at them.

"Tasty! I wonder, maybe I should eat that the next time I come ..."

Dina, who usually talk in a polite tone, sometimes loosen up when she eats something delicious or gets excited.

"..... Dina feels more friendly with that way of speaking."

"I'm sorry for my unpleasant wording."

Dina is startled from hearing Souta's remark and then corrects her sitting posture.

"Well, whatever, it'll change before long."

Looking at Dina whose way of speech is already back to normal, Souta decides to leave it without any further comments.

The waitress who measures the timing of when the food on Souta's table has already cleared, checks on them and then brings out the cake they ordered.

"Excuse me, here are the cakes you ordered for dessert."

When Dina's long-awaited cakes arrive, Souta divides both vertically in half and then splits the halves between the two plates.

"This should be fine. Dina's get the fruits that are on top."

"Thank you!"

The cake is cut into pieces that are almost the same size, and Dina who gets both of the fruits lets out a smile even brighter than before.

"N~~, tasty!"

Even if her vocabulary to express how tasty it is is scarce, her fascinating face tells its taste beyond words. Feeling satisfied while watching her face, Souta has his piece of the cake.

"Hmm~ certainly, it has a nice taste."

It is fluffy; the slightly moist dough leaves a comfortable texture in the mouth.

The cream that's not too sweet, the fruity flavor that spreads in the mouth, and the fragrance brings about an elegant flavor for the cake.

They're immersed in the taste for a while, but they feel loneliness as the dish gradually becomes empty, and finally, they completely finish the cake.

After finishing the cake, they sit around while having a cup of tea. After a while, Souta asks her to go.

"..... Now then, shall we go back and continue our investigation?"

"I agree....."

The footsteps of the two who go back to the library after taking care of the payment are filled with reluctance.

Chapter 77

Returning to the library, greeting them from the receptionist desk are piles of books, the result of the two librarians competing with each other to find information.

"Err, this is....."

With Dina's voice as a sign, the two librarians finally notice Souta and Dina.

"Ah~, I have been waiting!"

The female librarian rushes out of the counter before approaching the two.

"Welco-Ah!"

Not wanting to lose, the male librarian also leaves the counter, but he knocks over a pile of books, making them fall to the floor. And so he gathers them and then puts them back on the counter.

"Ah-Is it fine to leave him alone like that?"

Answering Souta's question is a nod and the refreshing smile of the female librarian.

"It is fine, that is what he got from handling the books roughly."

Despite her expression, it's clear that her smile doesn't reach her eyes.

"Errr, here is the book you are looking for, and also this..... and I believe this will also help you."

She takes some books and hands them to Souta. The books that were loaded in large quantities at the counter were ones that were checked to find these materials.

"Thank you, this helps us a lot. I seem to have increased your workload too, my bad."

"No, finding books that the consumer wants is also a job for a librarian, so there is no problem!"

She answers with confidence while puffing out her chest, implying it's a matter of course.

"I-I believe you should also do your work other than that."

Just when the male librarian comes over after being delayed from tidying the books, he makes a complaint to Rena.

"Or so you say, but I believe Gai-kun needs to treat the books more carefully."

Rena looks away while warning Gai in return.

"No, it was just a coincidence while I was in a hurry, normally such a thing is..... More importantly, in your case, Rena, don't you stop doing whatever work you need to do to look for the book. Certainly, helping the consumers find the books they want is important, but your actual work is also as important. Once you're done, you need to do your original work."

For every one of Rena's words, Gai returns five or six words. Knowing that her remark invited this, Rena hangs her head.

"In the first place Rena....."

Dina, who feels that she can't keep still and watching them, interrupts their conversation.

"U-Ummm I apologize for interrupting your conversation, but we want to check the material, so may we go?"

Gai remembers that he himself was also looking for material after listening to Rena's explanation.

"M-My deepest apologies. I was setting a bad example as a librarian for using a loud voice in a library."

When Gai apologizes, Rena also lowers her head, looking dejected.

"It sometimes happens even for a librarian. Fortunately, there are no other guests coming other than us, so as long as we don't mind, there is no problem. I'm also indebted to you for looking for the material, I won't complain about this."

"That is right! Ouch."

As Rena raises her head with a glad-looking expression, Gai pokes her head lightly.

"Don't get carried away, what you did is still a bad thing regardless."

"Geez, it hurts Gai-kun. Raising your hand toward a woman, how terrible."

Even though they can see how close the two are from such exchange, Souta and Dina would still prefer to continue their research.

"Ahh, you can continue your banter. We're going to read the books she has provided. Well then, thank you."

Souta tries to move on from that place quickly, but another voice stops him

from doing so, again.

"Oh, please wait."

After slightly looking up from annoyance, Souta turns around.

"What is it? I'd like you to let us continue our research, but..."

"I'm sorry, this is the last one, I also prepared some material for your investigation, please use it."

On Gai's hand are several books, that's received by Dina.

"Thank you very much. Now then, let's go?"

Dina holds the books with one hand, while she uses the other hand to push Souta's back as she moves to the table.

"Now then, Souta-san, they already spend great effort preparing these books so, let's read it."

"Right."

After setting up the books they received from the librarian, they start reading them.

The sound of pages flipping over echoes around. However, unlike before, Souta's hand stop halfway. It's the same for Dina, she stops her hand and then read the page over and over again. After taking note of point of interest they find, they move to the next book after they finish one. By the time the repetition of those had finished for all the books, the time has already indicated that the sun has almost set.

"Fuhh~ Looking at the progress we're making right now, it feels like the time we spent this morning were wasted."

Turning his shoulders around, he speaks to Dina.

"Right, as I thought, a pro is amazing."

Dina, who had finished reading a while ago, piled up the books they'd finished reading by size.

"So, did you get any information from those?"

"Of course, Souta-san too?"

Answering Dina, Souta nods.

"Yes, I found some points of concern, though I can't really talk about it and analyze it here, right? Let's go back to the mansion before talking about those." Considering that they will talk about the story from a thousand years ago, to

avoid being overheard by others, Souta decides to go back to the mansion to discuss the investigation.

"You're right, then the books..... Where should we take these? I guess for now we should take these to the receptionists?"

Dina takes all the books they borrowed, stands up, and heads to the receptionist table. Souta, a bit behind her, catches up with her and takes half the books Dina takes, then they head to the receptionist together.

While they head toward the reception, how about the two librarians? It seems they heard Souta and Dina and are watching h them come over.

""H-How was it?""

They ask the question at the same time.

"A-Ah, that was really helpful. I was able to extract the information I want." As the two asking while lean out of the receptionist table, Souta draws back a little before answering the question.

"So which book did you find useful?"

Rena leans further and asks that.

"Hm, I only read the books prepared by Rena. You read the books prepared by Gai right, Dina? As such we can't really tell which one is more helpful, I guess?" Hearing Souta's answer, Rena looks dissatisfied.

"Ehh~ Then we cannot tell who wins."

Pouting, she asks for approval from Gai.

"It is as Rena says..... Can not you decide one of them somehow?"

It seems they made this a contest, and it seems he wants to make sure the game doesn't end unsettled.

"As I thought, you two are on good terms."

Dina honestly says her impression about them.

"Who is on good terms!"

"Yes, who is on good terms with this man!"

"You really are close after all..."

Souta has the same impression as Dina.

"T-There is no such thing. Gai is, his mouth is bad, inflexible, he is really an unpleasant person."

"What did you say! You are immature, a selfish person who doesn't take her job seriously."

With the two starting to fight, to not get caught up in it, Souta and Dina put the books softly on the counter, and then leave the library.

Chapter 78

After they return to the mansion from the library, they start to discuss the information they got in the mansion's living room.

A large paper is prepared on the table as they decided to write the important information while they talk about it.

"Then, I'll start listing the point I found first."

"Okay, I'll take care of the writing then."

Souta takes the pen and prepares to write.

"The information I got was mainly about the dragonkins. Since they lost their hero a thousand years ago, their whereabouts no longer can be seen in history."

Souta who had collected the information about the dragonkin also nods, agreeing with Dina.

"Seems so. That's also the information I got before. None of the books I read have some information about their whereabouts."

Dina also nods back.

"Yes, since I couldn't get another information, I was convinced that nothing is wrong with that, but from the book I borrowed from the librarian this afternoon, I read a story from slightly different perspective."

"Those two... Seems like they're better than I thought."

Souta, once again, impressed by the two who was able to prepare the books despite their ambiguous description.

"First of all, it seems the dragonkin drops a gem at the time of their death. It's written that the gem's size is proportional with the owner's age."

"Hmm..... Then that guy's gem should be quite large. He was over 500 years old at that point after all."

"Right. With dragonkin's battle maniac nature, they should be rarely able to live their full lifespan. 500 years old should be pretty rare."

His figure which is an experienced fighter among the heroes appears in both of their mind.

"Continuing. It's a gem, but for the gem that is hundreds of years old, it seems to be exist as a national treasure for the race. It has enormous amount of magic power and part of the memories are sealed inside it. It seems there were many who know about this trying to target it in the past."

Upon seeing the changes in Souta's expression when he hears the part about memories, Dina nods.

"I thought about the same thing. Just like how I got my brother's memories via Pair Connect, it's possible dragonkin also got the information about the outcome of the battle via that gem. And the reason they went into hiding, I believe it's to protect that gem."

Souta tilts his head while writing Dina's opinion.

"Hmmm.... I also thought so... But how did that gem reach the dragonkin? Moreover, if it's only part of the memories, it's possible that the "part" is not about our last fight. I feel like we lack just a little bit of information."

"It might be the other person I saw in my brother's memories. That person might be the one who handed over the jewel and information to the dragonkin."

Souta feels that there is a possibility for that to be true when he compares it with the information he has.

"Though, if we decide that the information about the dragonkin to be true, then it might be the reason in the course of a thousand years, the dragonkin never lead a war against the human, even though they have a reason to do so."

Sota raises his head as he finishes writing Dina's opinion.

"That's possible. So we need to look for the whereabouts of the dragonkin. The problem is....."

"The whereabouts... Right. Maybe we can find it if we know who gave the gem to the dragonkin."

Souta shakes his head.

"I'm in favor to look for that person, but whether the person, or his descendant know about it..... It might not be that easy. In the first place, dragonkins have a strong ties between their own race. They would be trying their best to not leak any information about their whereabouts, as it involves the safety of their friends and family."

"Is that so..... So I guess, it will really difficult."

Dina drops her shoulders and looks down.

"Don't look so down, at least wait until you hear what I gather. It's about the gnomes."

Dina showing a large reaction hearing Souta's remark, she immediately raises her head.

"You guessed right. Your theory is most likely right."

Souta grins toward Dina.

"First of all, since the Elder dies a thousand years ago, their race seems to

came apart, scattered and live in small settlements across the continent. It's said their behaviour is because their small bodies and inferior physical power compared to other races."

"In those days, every gnomes come together under Elder-san and formed a state right? So that means once he dies, the nation he made fall apart?"

After thinking for a bit, Souta answers Dina's question.

"... It's possible, but it feels strange that the Elder didn't give further instructions before he went to the journey. Well, it's possible with his death, his family also came into disagreement."

Dina also replies to Souta after thinking a little.

"Hmm... It's possible for that to happen... But will they really keep fighting even to the point they ignored Elder's instruction?"

"Yeah, I already thought so. But, as I don't know the actual information, we can only make assumption for now. Still, it's strange if they just fall apart just because of in-fighting. So I assume, just like you and me, the Elder had also survived."

Dina nods enthusiastically.

"If it's him, then it's no wonder he knows about the dragonkin gem, and I can see why he brought that gem to the dragonkin. Moreover, it's easier to believe if Elder was the one who scatter his race."

"If so, the dot is connected... But that's only assuming if the Elder was alive. I hope there are some evidence supporting this out there."

"Ahh that's only if our information stop at this point. I searched for other

things and found a bit information from the history of beastman."

"Beastman?"

Dina talks with a finger at her mouth.

"Just like the dragonkin, the beastman are also a battle maniac race. However, even though their relationship with human are bad, they seems to never wage a war against human race."

"That means, they have some reason just like the dragonkin?"

"Most probably. And so I tried to look for it from various books, and..... apparently there seems to be a story from the beastman countries that's different from the story passed in the other countries. Although the story is now become a mainstream fact, in beastman's story, it's said that the different world hero repatriated earlier and dragonkin hero, elves hero, and beastman hero were killed by other person. And the name of the author of that story is Grevin."

Dina gasped when she hears that name.

The name of the Elder is Gregor Marvin. He's usually called as Greg or Marve. Souta's party, however, made a nickname for him and end up calling him Grema. At that time, the other name proposed by the party and rejected by the Elder himself was Grevin.